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DISCOURSES

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NOW FIRST DIGESTED INTO ONE CONTINUED SERIES

AND FORMING A COMMENTARY

UPON EVERY BOOK OF

THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT;

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,

AN IMPROVED EDITION OF A TRANSLATION OF

CLAUDE'S ESSAY ON THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.

IN TWENTY-ONE VOLUMES.

BY THE REV. CHARLES SIMEON, M.A.

SENIOR FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

VOL. XXI.

REVELATION.—CLAUDE'S ESSAY.—INDEXES.

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REVELATION.

MMCCCCLXXV.

EACH PERSON IN THE HOLY TRINITY TO BE ADDRESSED
IN PRAYER.

Rev. i. 4, 5. *John to the seven churches which are in Asia :
Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which
was, and which is to come ; and from the seven Spirits which
are before his throne ; and from Jesus Christ, who is the
faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the
prince of the kings of the earth.*

THE revelations of St. John are doubtless extremely difficult to be understood : but yet a particular blessing is promised to the study of them : and certainly, in proportion as they are understood, they enlarge the heart towards God, who foresees every thing from the beginning, and ordains every thing for the accomplishment of his own eternal purposes. It is not however my design, at this time, to enter into any of those events which are predicted in this book ; but only to draw your attention to this introductory passage, which will be found replete with the most important instruction.

It may be viewed,

I. As a benedictory salutation—

It is customary with the inspired writers to begin almost all their epistles with a salutation similar to that before us. “Grace and peace” comprehend all those blessings which a sinner needs, and which every

Christian supremely desires. These are invoked in behalf of the seven churches of the Lesser Asia; and are implored, with remarkable distinctness, from each Person in the ever-blessed Trinity.

1. From God the Father—

[He is described in terms declarative of his essential perfections; and with a peculiarity of language which will perhaps be found in no other writer, nor in the writings of St. John himself, except in this place^a. It should seem that the Apostle had in his mind a special reference to the name of the Deity as revealed to Moses, when he was commissioned to declare to his brethren, "I AM hath sent me unto you^b." And intending to convey an idea of Jehovah's self-existence from eternity to eternity, and the absolute unchangeableness of his nature, he expressed himself in the most significant terms that language could afford, yea, and in terms which even violated the proprieties of language, that so he might communicate his idea in a more determined form.

To Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, even the Father, as to the fountain and source of all good, he looked in the first instance, desiring that grace and mercy might descend from him.]

2. From the Holy Spirit—

[It is not to be conceived that the Apostle should unite angels with Jehovah as a source of "grace and peace;" and address himself, as it were, in prayer to them. Nor is there, as far as we know, any more reason for his addressing "*seven*" of them, than seventy times seven. It must be remembered, that the whole book of Revelation is emblematical and figurative; and therefore the Apostle addresses the Holy Spirit in language suited to the whole character of the book which he was about to write. The number *seven*, amongst the Hebrews, was considered as expressing perfection: and when the Apostle uses the expression, "the seven Spirits," he is not to be understood as speaking of seven different persons, but of the Holy Spirit, in all his diversified gifts and operations. And he represents him as "before the throne;" because, in the economy of redemption, both he and the Lord Jesus Christ act in subordination to the Father: the Father sends the Son; and both the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit; who is therefore represented as "before the throne," ready to execute any commission that shall be assigned him. He, as

^a The nominative case is put instead of the genitive; ὁ ὢν, for τοῦ ὄντος, κ. τ. λ.

^b Exod. iii. 14.

the great Agent to convey all that the Father has ordained, and all that the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased for sinful man; he, I say, together with the Father, is also supplicated in behalf of the seven Churches, to impart unto them the blessings which are here implored.]

3. From the Lord Jesus Christ—

[He, too, is here described by the various offices which he performs in behalf of our ruined race. As the great *Prophet*, he is “the faithful Witness,” who came on purpose “that he might bear witness to the truth,” and who has declared to men all that he was commissioned to reveal. He has made known the Father to us, and has plainly shewn how we are to obtain acceptance with him. “Verily it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners:” nor is it less true, that, as he is “the way, the truth, and the life,” so “no man cometh unto the Father but by Him.”

As our great *High-Priest*, he has offered himself a sacrifice for our sins; and, having risen from the dead, he has entered into the holy of holies, there to present his blood before the throne, and there to make continual intercession for us. He rose, not as others, to die again, but to an immortal life: and in this respect he was “The first begotten from the dead,” and “The first-fruits of them that slept^d.” In this, as in every thing else, “He has the pre-eminence^e.”

As our *King*, also, is he here addressed. For he is exalted above all the principalities and powers both of heaven and earth: he is “the Prince of the kings of the earth,” even “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” And in all these offices he is empowered to act for us, and to communicate to us according to our necessities. He is indeed the living Head, “in whom is all fulness treasured up for us;” and “out of whose fulness we all receive grace for grace.”

I dwell not upon the particular description of the Sacred Three; it being my intention only to shew that we are authorized to look to our Triune God, who is ever ready to hear our supplications, whether for ourselves or for each other, and to grant unto us all that our necessities require. “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, were we baptized;” and for “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,” we are taught to pray: and if the passage before us be not so obvious in its import at the first sight, I think that, when viewed aright, it teaches us very strongly the same instructive lesson.]

^c John xiv. 6.

^d 1 Cor. xv. 20.

^e Col. i. 18.

I proceed, therefore, to consider the words before us,

II. As an instructive admonition—

We see in it,

1. What should be the supreme object of our desire—

[“Grace and peace,” as we have already observed, include all that a sinner needs, or that a saint can desire. In truth, we do need them, no less for our present comfort than for our eternal welfare. That we have all greatly offended God by our innumerable transgressions, can admit of no doubt; and unless his “grace” and favour be extended to us, we must perish. Nor can we turn to him of ourselves: we must receive from him that “grace” and strength, which alone can qualify us for that arduous task. But, till this is effected, we can have no peace, either with God or in our own conscience. God has said, that “there is no peace to the wicked: and I will venture to ask, of all who are here present, whether they know any thing of solid peace in their minds, except as they have sought it in earnest prayer, through the mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ? *Insensibility*, indeed, is common enough: but even that can only be maintained in a neglect of all serious thoughts of the eternal world. At the prospect of death and judgment the stoutest stand appalled, unless they have come to God through Christ, and obtained from him that peace which Christ alone can give.

Now then, I say, These are the blessings which we should desire infinitely beyond all earthly good. The *godly* should affect them as the only means of true happiness. They were necessary for all the seven Churches of Asia, and for the most advanced Christian amongst them. And are they not necessary for the *ungodly*? They may possibly amuse themselves during this short life, though destitute of grace and peace: but what will they do in a dying hour, and when they shall be summoned to the bar of judgment? How “will they call on the rocks to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb,” whom they have so long neglected and despised! I would that the lovers of this present world would bethink themselves what their present vanities will avail them in that awful day; and that now, whilst an opportunity is afforded them, they would flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life.]

2. Whence alone they are to be obtained—

[Persons have some general idea of the mercy of God, without ever considering in what way that mercy shall be

exercised. But, indeed, my brethren, God must be approached in the way that he himself has pointed out. Did any offender, under the law, come to God without a sacrifice? So neither can ye, without that great Sacrifice which has been offered for the sins of the whole world. Nor did any come but through the mediation of the priest, who was appointed to present his sacrifice to God: so neither can ye, but through the mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus. Were lustrations and sprinklings appointed by the law? So must ye also have the Holy Spirit poured out upon you, to sanctify you throughout. Do not imagine that these are mere notions, which may be disregarded, without any loss to your souls. Indeed it is not so. To what purpose has God revealed these truths, if they are not to be received and acted upon by us? Know ye, then, that if ye would have "grace and peace" vouchsafed unto your souls, you must come to God through Christ, and by his Spirit; (for there is no other way of "access to him;") and then will each person of the ever-blessed Trinity impart unto you these blessings, in the way that God has ordained, and in the measure that he shall see fit.]

TWO REFLECTIONS, almost of necessity, obtrude themselves upon us, as arising from this subject—

1. How ignorant are the generality of the Christian world!

[It is surprising how little the peculiar doctrines of our holy religion are considered. The generality of Christians have scarcely any other views of God than such as a Mahometan entertains. Many actually discard all idea of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. But, where the doctrine of the Trinity is professedly received, it is, for the most part, regarded as a merely speculative and unimportant tenet. But, indeed, it is a *practical* and *most important* doctrine: *practical*, because the whole life of faith is affected by it; and *important*, because it is only by maintaining a due regard to it, in our approaches to God, that we can obtain from God any spiritual benefit. And here I will ask of those who have not realized these truths in their minds, What have been your prayers? and, What blessings have they brought down into your souls? True indeed it is, that a poor contrite sinner shall be heard, even though he may not yet have been fully instructed in this mystery: but let those answer, who, whilst they have professed to acknowledge this great mystery, have been regardless of it in their approaches to God: What have been your prayers? Have they not been cold, formal, and altogether destitute of any divine energy? And what have you gained by them? Are you not at this hour as far from God as ever, and as

destitute of grace and peace as ever? Look at the great mass of Christians, even of those who would be thought religious: How many are there who, in the course of ten or twenty years, have never advanced a single step in vital godliness! I will not say, indeed, that this is owing to their neglect of this particular doctrine; because, doubtless, there are many other causes to which it may be traced, and the same want of proficiency may be found amongst some of its warmest advocates: but this I will say, that, amongst those who disregard this mystery, the want of proficiency and of spirituality is universal: and it is no wonder that they never make any advance in the divine life; because, if they go not to God in the way in which alone he will be found, they can never hope to receive from him the blessings which they stand in need of. On the other hand, only contemplate the Deity as he is here set forth: think of each Person in the ever-blessed Trinity sustaining distinct offices for you; and possessing each, as it were, a treasure of blessings to pour out on you, the very instant you go to God in his appointed way: what a pledge does this give you of an attention to your supplications, and of success in your endeavours! To all I say, Study with all diligence the character of Jehovah; and improve, for your benefit, the offices which, in your behalf, he is ready to discharge.]

2. How low and grovelling is the taste of the Christian world!

[What do men affect, either for themselves or for those connected with them? They desire nothing beyond this present world. Whatever will advance the welfare of the body, they are anxious to obtain; but for spiritual blessings they have no wish. Indeed, the very idea of "grace and peace," as derived from the different Persons of the Godhead, and as enjoyed in a man's own soul, they regard, for the most part, as no better than a fanatical conceit. But such was not David's sentiment. When the inquiry occurred to him, "Who will shew us any good?" his answer was, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." Yes, to that he looked for happiness, more than to the greatest possible increase of corn or wine or oil. Worldly prosperity was to him no better than dross or dung, in comparison of the welfare of his soul. O! let it be so with you, my brethren. Let the continual language of your soul be, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, O Lord? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee." Remember, I pray you, what is the distinctive character of a true Christian: it is not by any peculiar notions that he is to be known; no, nor by any outward acts. No: it is by his predominant *taste*: he desires, above all things, an increase of grace and peace: in comparison of these, all other

things are but as the small dust upon the balance. O brethren! raise your minds to these things: "set your affections on them, and not on things on the earth." Then shall these blessings abound in your souls, and earth become to you the very porch of heaven.]

MMCCCCLXXVI.

THE GROUNDS OF PRAISE TO CHRIST.

Rev. i. 5, 6. *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

WHILE men continue in a natural and unrenewed state, they feel very little gratitude for the mercies of Providence, and are altogether unmindful of the blessings of redemption. But when the grace of God has wrought effectually on their hearts, they begin to view his hand in all the comforts they enjoy, and to bless him more especially for the wonders of redeeming love. Whenever they are in a frame of mind at all suited to their character, they are ready to burst forth, like the beloved disciple, into expressions of rapture and adoration.

In the words before us we are led to consider,

I. The grounds of our love to Christ—

Doubtless he is worthy of our love for his own sake, seeing that "he is fairer than ten thousand, and altogether lovely^a:" but he is also to be loved on account of what he has done for us:

"He has loved us"—

[This he has done from all eternity: he has done it, notwithstanding there was nothing lovely in us, neither had we any love for him; yea, notwithstanding there was every thing in us that was hateful, and we were full of enmity against him^b. Though he never manifested any love to the angels who fell, yet has he loved us: and love has been the one principle that actuated him in all that he has done for us^c.]

^a Cant. v. 10, 16.

^b Tit. iii. 3. Rom. viii. 7.

^c Eph. v. 2, 25. Gal. ii. 20.

“He has washed us from our sins in his own blood”—

[Rivers of tears were insufficient to wash away one sin: nor was there any fountain in the whole creation that could cleanse a guilty soul. He therefore, rather than we should perish, provided one for us; and suffered his own sacred body to be broken up, in order that we might be washed in his precious blood. This is sufficient, as thousands have experienced, to purge from sins of deepest die; and every believer, however aggravated his past iniquities may have been, may glory, in that he has been made whiter than wool or snow^d.

O what love was this! If he had washed us in the blood of slain beasts, or sent an angel to die for us, it were a wonderful act of mercy: but to wash us in his own blood! O the heights and depths of this incomprehensible love!]

“He has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father”—

[Astonishing is the exultation which the believer now enjoys: even Lazarus was greater than the highest monarchs upon earth, and exercised a government to which their power could not extend. The Christian's spiritual enemies are under his controul: his lusts are subjected to his dominion^e; and Satan himself flees from him with trepidation, as from a victorious prince^f.

With this dignity, he bears also that of priesthood. Time was, when God himself would avenge the insult, if even a king had dared to invade the office of the priesthood^g: but now all Christ's ransomed people are admitted to it^h; they are anointed to it with an holy unction; they have access at all times within the veil; and they offer unto God continually the sacrifices of prayer and praise.]

If, on considering these things, we feel love and gratitude rising in our hearts, let us learn from the Apostle,

II. The manner in which we should express it—

We should not rest in the gift, but raise up our minds unto the Donor—

1. We should contemplate him in our minds—

[The abrupt manner in which the Apostle introduces this song of praise, and the energetic way in which he directs our

^d Isai. i. 18.

^e Gal. v. 24.

^f Jam. iv. 7.

^g 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—21.

^h 1 Pet. ii. 9.

eyes to Christⁱ, sufficiently shew, that his mind was filled with his subject; and that he had a lively sense, not only of the benefits conferred on him, but also of the excellency of that Saviour, from whom they were derived. Now thus it should be with us: "Our hearts should muse, till the fire kindles, and we speak with our tongue." And is there any other subject in the world so interesting, so noble, so profound? Is there any other being to whom we are so indebted, or in the contemplation of whose glory we can rest with such delight? Let us then keep our eyes fixed on HIM, till we exclaim with the prophet, "How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty^k!"

2. We should adore him with our lips—

[Higher strains of adoration cannot be paid to God the Father, than are here offered to Jesus Christ^l. We therefore may worship him as the supreme God, even as all the hosts of saints and angels are doing around his throne^m. He has all those perfections that deserve glory, and all that power that is entitled to dominion. To him therefore let glory and dominion be ascribed. Let us never be afraid of honouring him too much; for we never more truly exalt the Father than when we honour the Son as the Fatherⁿ.]

3. We should glorify him by our lives—

[When the Apostle ascribed glory and dominion to Christ, he did not mean to except himself from the number of those who should honour his perfections, and submit to his government: but rather by the addition of "Amen," he purposely expressed his acquiescence in that which he required from others. Thus, without claiming any exemption for ourselves, we should cordially devote to him the souls which he has purchased with his blood: we should yield to his authority in all that he commands; and seek his glory in all that we perform.]

ADDRESS—

1. To those who are unmindful of what Christ has done for them—

[It scarcely seems credible that such persons should be found in a Christian land: but, alas! they abound in every place. But let them blush for their ingratitude. Let them know too, that the very blood which was shed to cleanse them from their sins, will aggravate, instead of removing, their eternal condemnation.]

ⁱ "To him, to *him*."

^k Zech. ix. 17.

^l Compare 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. and 1 Pet. v. 11.

^m Rev. v. 12, 13.

ⁿ John v. 23.

2. To those who are doubting whether they be interested in what Christ has done—

[We are not to ascertain our interest in Christ *first*, and then to go to him for salvation; but first to go to him for salvation, and then, from the exercises and fruits of our faith, to conclude that we do indeed belong to him. If the time that is lost in doubting and questioning, were improved in fervent applications to him for mercy, we should soon be enabled to say, “He has loved *me*, and given himself for *me*.” Instead of asking, Am I washed in his blood? go, and wash in it, and be clean.]

3. To those who are glorying in Christ as their Saviour—

[What a heaven upon earth do you enjoy! for, what is the state, what is the employment, of those above? They are kings seated on their thrones: they are priests offering their sacrifices before the mercy-seat: they are singing, in one universal chorus, Salvation to God and to the Lamb. Such is your state, such is your employment, at this very hour. It is not said, that you *shall be* washed, or *shall be* made kings and priests unto God, but that you already possess these inestimable privileges. Go on then, ever mindful of these mercies, and of him who procured them for you by his blood: and give him glory and dominion for ever and ever, as well in the rectitude of your lives, as in the devotion of your hearts.]

° Gal. ii. 20.

MMCCCCLXXVII.

CHRIST COMING TO JUDGMENT.

Rev. i. 7. *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*

THE great subject of the book of Revelation seems to be, to predict the trials and deliverances of God's Church to the end of time. To a superficial observer, it would appear strange that God should permit his enemies to triumph for so long a period, and in so awful a degree. But there is a time coming when all these inequalities in the Divine government will be rectified, and a righteous retribution be given to those who suffered, and to those also who inflicted

the sufferings upon them. To this period our attention is directed in the very commencement of this prophecy; that persecutors may know what tribulation awaits them, and the persecuted may be comforted in the prospect of their eternal rest.

Let us then contemplate,

I. The future judgment of our Lord—

Behold, he is surely coming to judge the world—

[Our blessed Lord is “ordained of the Father to be the Judge both of quick and dead”— — — The time for his future advent, though not known either to men or angels, is fixed in the counsels of the Father: and at the appointed instant it shall arrive. The world will be sleeping in security and carelessness, as much as ever they were in the days of Noah: but it will not on that account be delayed: “it will come as a thief in the night, and as travail upon a woman with child”— — — With inconceivable glory will the Lord Jesus then appear, surrounded with myriads of the heavenly host, and “coming in the clouds of heaven”— — — His judgment-seat will be erected, the books wherein all the actions, words, and thoughts of men are recorded, will be opened, and all the universe be summoned to give an account of themselves to him — — —]

Then “shall every eye see him”—

[All who have ever lived, from the very commencement to the end of time, shall be raised from the dead, each in his own proper body. The sea as well as the land will give up the dead that are in it, and not an individual, however great or however obscure, be wanting — — — All will surround his throne, and behold him in full view: not as unconcerned spectators, but as criminals, whose cause he is about to try, and whose state he will fix in happiness or misery for ever and ever — — —]

Thus certain, and thus awful, will be “our gathering unto Jesus at the last day.” But let us more distinctly consider,

II. Its aspect on the different classes of mankind—

The text more especially refers to the ungodly: but, as all will be equally interested in that event, we shall extend our views to the world at large; and consider the aspect of our Lord’s advent,

1. On the ungodly—

[“ Those who pierced our Lord ” in the days of his flesh, thought not that they should ever behold his face again : but every one of them shall be summoned to his presence in that day. Pilate with the chief priests, and Herod with his men of war, and all the populace who demanded his crucifixion, and the soldiers who mocked him in gorgeous apparel, and drove the crown of thorns into his temples, and those who ploughed long furrows on his back by scourging, and those who nailed him to the cross, and the soldier that pierced his sacred body after he was dead, and all who approved of those proceedings, shall in that day see him yet once more, with all the marks of their cruelty yet upon him : yes, they shall all recognize in his glorious person the Man whom once they treated with such indignity. But how widely changed the condition both of themselves and him ! Themselves, no longer in a capacity to oppress ; and him, no longer capable of suffering from oppression : themselves, as malefactors and murderers ; and him, as the Judge about to take cognizance of their offences : themselves, as children of the devil ; and him, as “ the Lord of glory ! ” O, with what horror will they be struck ! with what dread will they be overwhelmed !

But are there not many who “ pierce the Lord ” at this time also, and “ crucify him afresh,” by continuing in their sins ? Yes verily, there are many amongst us not a whit less criminal than his very murderers ; I should rather say, far more criminal ; inasmuch as they who reject him now, sin against incomparably greater light than was enjoyed by any previous to his crucifixion. It is this that makes the sin against the Holy Ghost so heinous, in comparison of the sins committed against the Son of man. The Holy Ghost has borne such testimony to the truth, as nothing but wilful infidelity can resist. And they who at this day hear the Gospel preached to them, and make no account of all the wonders of love and mercy that are set before them, have a measure of guilt which will make their last state worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Think then, ye, who, having heard the truth, reject it, and, more especially, ye, who, having embraced the truth, dishonour it, or depart from it, think, I say, what will be your views and feelings, when you shall behold that Saviour face to face ! Will ye not be ready to call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon you, and to cover you from his wrath ? Yes, indeed will ye ; and if even the whole earth will wail because of him, much more will ye, who have received all his grace in vain.

The Apostle adds, “ Even so ; Amen : ” by which I understand him, not merely as confirming the truths which he has before asserted, but as acquiescing in them as every way worthy of their Divine Author. *It is right* that those who once

pierced him when on earth should wail because of him; and *it is right* that they also who reject him now should feel the full weight of his displeasure. St. Paul himself puts that matter beyond all doubt, when he says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha."]

2. On the godly—

[Blessed be God, though all the unregenerate shall wail, there are some to whom the Saviour's advent will be a ground of joy! We are told, that the saints "wait for his appearing," and "love it," and "look forward and haste unto it," and in the spirit of their minds are saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." However terrible his advent will be to others, it will not be so to them; for the prospect of being called to "meet the Lord in the air," is that which St. Paul teaches us to regard as a source of the richest consolation, under whatever trials or losses we may be called to sustain. "Comfort ye one another," says he, "with these words."

But here you will naturally ask, Whence arises this difference between the two? Why do the one behold him with such anguish of heart, and the others with such unutterable joy? I answer, The godly have beheld him *here*, and "mourned before him as for an only Son^a." They have seen how grievously they have themselves pierced him by their iniquities; and they have bewailed their guilt and folly with the deepest contrition. They have even looked to his wounds as endured for their transgressions; and have sought for "healing to their souls by the stripes inflicted on him:" and having done this by faith, they are accepted before God, and shall "be presented before him faultless with exceeding joy."

Seek ye then, beloved, "the Spirit of grace and of supplications," whom God has promised to pour out upon you. Then shall you have such views of the Saviour as shall bring peace to your souls, and such views as will give you confidence before him at his future coming.]

^a Zech. xii. 10.

MMCCCCLXXVIII.

BEING IN THE SPIRIT.

Rev. i. 10. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.*

WE are told by our blessed Lord, "Not to fear those who can only kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." The truth is, that whilst men are wreaking their vengeance upon the body,

they cannot obstruct God's communications to the soul, or destroy the happiness of those whom they desire to torment. Paul and Silas have borne testimony to this: for, with their feet fastened in the stocks, and their backs torn with scourges, they "sang praises to God aloud at midnight." St. John, too, when he was "banished to the Isle of Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ:" and was there "a companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," participating, in his advanced age, the afflictions with which all the seven Churches of Asia had been visited; he, I say, received more abundant manifestations of God's love to his soul, and was honoured there with revelations more full and complete, than were ever vouchsafed to any other child of man. And we also, if suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ, may expect that, "as our afflictions abound, so also shall our consolations abound by Christ^a."

In confirmation of this, I will shew,

I. How far this experience of St. John may be realized in us—

When it is said, that "He was in the Spirit" on the Lord's day, I conceive that we are to understand, he was in a trance or ecstasy, somewhat similar to that of the Apostle Paul, who was "caught up into the third heavens, and knew not whether he was in the body, or out of the body^b." Yet, as it was the Lord's day, a day kept sacred by the Christian Church, in commemoration of the resurrection of our blessed Lord^c, we may be sure that he was in a frame of mind becoming the Sabbath of the Lord. Now, I readily acknowledge, that, as far as relates to any thing miraculous, Christians of the present day

^a 2 Cor. i. 5.

^b 2 Cor. xii. 2—4. with Rev. iv. 2.

^c On the first day of the week our Lord appeared to his Disciples: on that day, in the following week, he appeared to them again, John xx. 19, 26. From that time the Church assembled on that day for holy exercises, Acts xx. 7; and it was ever afterwards kept holy, 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

have no warrant to expect any communications similar to those which were vouchsafed to John: but of spiritual blessings it is the privilege of every Christian to participate; and on the Sabbath-day he ought to experience a more abundant effusion of them on his soul.

1. The Lord's day is set apart for that end—

[It is a day on which all worldly business should be suspended, and the soul be wholly given up to divine and spiritual employments. The *ceremonial* part of the Sabbath may be considered as abrogated, together with the rest of the Mosaic ritual: but the *moral* observance of it is as much in force as ever. Even in Paradise *that* was enjoined, and therefore we are assured it is of perpetual obligation: and the kind of observance which it demands, is well described by the prophet: "Thou shalt turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and shalt call the Sabbath a delight; the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words^d." Here we see how the Sabbath should be sanctified: every thing that is earthly and carnal should be banished from our minds; and our whole conversation and employment should have a direct reference to God, and to the concerns either of our own souls, or of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world.]

2. Our frame of mind should be suited to it—

[If we regard the Lord's day as we ought, "then," as the prophet says, "shall we delight ourselves in the Lord; and he will cause us to ride upon the high places of the earth, and will feed us with the heritage of Jacob our father^e." Six days God has given us for earthly labour: the seventh should be wholly his; our thoughts and desires going out after him; our souls rising to him in sweet meditation, and in holy intercourse; our praises ascending from the altar of our hearts, and all our sacrifices doubled. In a word, we should then "dwell in God, and have God dwelling in us;" so near should be our access to him, so intimate our communion with him, so entirely our souls surrendered up to him. On every day we should be "a people near unto God;" but on the Sabbath more especially we should be able to say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ^f." In this sense we should "be in the Spirit on the Lord's day." To "be filled with the Spirit," is as much our privilege, as it was of the Apostles^g.

^d Isai. lviii. 13.

^f 1 John i. 3.

^e Isai. lviii. 14.

^g Eph. v. 18.

To "pray in the Holy Ghost," to "walk in the Spirit," and "live in the Spirit," are not peculiar to any order of men, or any age of the Church: they are duties enjoined on all^h: and if we serve our God with the fidelity that becomes us, these things will characterize our whole lives, whilst they will pre-eminently appear on the Sabbath-day.]

That we may not think lightly of this privilege, let me proceed to state,

II. The special call we have to seek it—

To illustrate this, I would observe,

1. Our necessities require it—

[By our intercourse with the world, we are, to a certain degree, clogged and fettered, so that we cannot run our race with the steadiness that we could wish. But, on the Sabbath-day, all "these weights are laid aside," and our garments being girt about us, we make our way with augmented rapidityⁱ. If I may be permitted to use so familiar an expression, we are going down, like a clock, throughout the week; and need to be wound up on the Sabbath-day, for further exertions in the service of our God. And who has ever truly sanctified his Sabbaths, without being able to attest, that they have been made effectual for this blessed end? Like Elijah, we have a long journey before us; and we eat richly of the provision which God has made for us. But God sets a second feast before us: and we rise and eat again; and are thus strengthened for exertions, which would have far surpassed our natural strength^k. Yes, a second ordinance has been the means of completing that, which the first had only begun. Indeed, God often so peculiarly adapts the provisions of his house to our peculiar necessities, that it seems as if the minister had been informed of our particular case, and had been addressing himself to us alone. And here I may put it to the conscience of every individual amongst us, and ask him, Whether he has not actually found that he has suffered loss in his soul, when he has neglected to improve a Sabbath, and spent it in vain pursuits? Nay, I may further ask, Whether a very great portion of the enormities committed, amongst those who call themselves Christians, may not, in a great measure, be traced to a neglect of the Sabbath-day? I may justly say then, that "the Sabbath was made for man^l," even for the supplying of our spiritual necessities; and that those necessities loudly call upon us to sanctify that day unto the Lord.]

^h Jude, ver. 20. Gal. v. 25.

^k 1 Kings xix. 5—8.

ⁱ Heb. xii. 1.

^l Mark ii. 27.

2. The ordinances are unprofitable to us without it—

[Whence is it that so many attend upon divine ordinances from year to year, and never derive any saving benefit from them? It is because they do not ever seek to be in the Spirit on the Lord's-day. When they wake in the morning, they have no distinct consciousness, that it is a day to be consecrated wholly to the Lord. When they rise, they do not earnestly implore help from God, to enable them to improve their time aright, and to sanctify to them the ordinances of his grace. When they come up to the house of God, they do not endeavour to get their minds duly impressed with a sense of the importance of the work in which they are engaged. When hearing the blessed word of God, they do not receive it as the word of God himself to their souls: nor, when his seed has been sown in their hearts, do they go and harrow it in by prayer. They attend on the duties of the Sabbath as a form; and never call themselves to an account at the close of the day, how they have improved it, or what blessing they have obtained, or whether they are one jot nearer to heaven. Is it to be wondered at that these persons never make any advance in religion? What kind of a crop would the husbandman have, if he were equally careless about his agricultural pursuits? Here, then, is the true reason why the most faithful ministers labour, as it respects the greater part of their hearers, in vain. A person who has attained to the age of forty-two has had no less than six entire years of Sabbaths. What might not such an one have attained, if he had improved them for the end for which they were given? what knowledge of divine truth, what enjoyment of the Divine presence, and what meetness for the heavenly inheritance? Yet are there many who have made no more advance in any of these things, than if no such opportunities had ever been afforded them. I charge you, brethren, that, whatever guilt you may have contracted by your abuse of past Sabbaths, you begin this day to improve them for your eternal good, that they may not rise up in judgment against you, to your everlasting confusion.]

3. The Sabbath thus improved, will be a foretaste of the eternal Sabbath to our souls—

[There is a rest remaining for the people of God. And, O! what a rest will that be!—an entire rest of the soul in God! a total absence of every disquieting thought! a complete enjoyment of the Divine presence, and a perfect exercise of all our faculties in His service! In proportion as we spend the Lord's day aright, this is our frame in this life: and our Sabbaths on earth are a preparation for, and a prelude to, our

eternal rest. Say, brethren, is it not desirable to enjoy, thus, what I may call a heaven upon earth? Do not grudge the labour or the self-denial that are necessary for the attainment of this state. Richly will the fruit repay the culture, and the recompence reward the toil experienced in the pursuit of it. See on a dying bed those who have employed their Sabbaths according to the will of God: will you find no difference between them and the careless votaries of pleasure? And, follow the two to the bar of judgment; and will you find no great distinction between them there? I say then, to every one amongst you, Fulfil your duties to the world, with zeal and diligence, on the six days that are allotted you, though not without a careful waiting upon God; for you may be "not slothful in business, and yet fervent in spirit, serving the Lord:" but, on the Sabbath, live exclusively for God, and seek to be wholly "in the Spirit on the Lord's-day."]

And now suffer, I pray you, a word of EXHORTATION—

[Consider, brethren, how many Sabbaths you have lost; and not one of them can ever be recalled. Consider, too, how few may yet remain to you. It is possible that, to some one here present, this very Sabbath may be the last. O! what bitter regret will arise in your minds, if you are called into eternity before the interests of your immortal souls have been secured! Do not delay this necessary work: do not arm death with terrors so appalling, as those must be which you will have to encounter in a dying hour, on a retrospect of your past advantages, and in the prospect of your future doom. Reflect, rather, how glorious your prospects will be on the borders of eternity, if now you give yourselves up wholly to your God; and how "abundant an entrance will then be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." I would that you would all set that day before you; and then I should have but little occasion to press upon you a due improvement of the Lord's day. But, I readily acknowledge, you cannot do this of yourselves. Yet you are not thereby justified: for the Spirit of God should assuredly be poured out upon you, if you would seek his influences; and through his mighty agency you should be raised to holy contemplations and to heavenly delights. May a Pentecostal effusion of that blessed Spirit be now experienced amongst you, and your present delight in God be a pledge and foretaste of your eternal blessedness!]

MMCCCCLXXIX.

ST. JOHN'S VISION.

Rev. i. 12—17. *And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.*

IN order to obtain the Divine blessing, it is necessary that we should wait upon God in all the ordinances of his appointment. Yet God has not so restricted his favours, but that we may expect the communication of them to our souls wherever we be, provided our neglect of his instituted means proceed from imperious necessity, and not from an indifference to his commands. St. John was banished to the Isle of Patmos, where he had no opportunity of assembling with the Church of Christ, and of sanctifying the Sabbath in the way to which he had been accustomed. But he sought the Lord in secret, and “was in the Spirit,” that is, in a holy heavenly frame, “on the Lord’s day:” and what was wanting to him in respect of external advantages, was abundantly compensated by an extraordinary vision of his Lord and Saviour.

We will,

I. Illustrate this vision—

In doing this, it will be proper to notice,

1. The person who appeared to him—

[This, though said to be “like unto the Son of man,” was not a created angel, but the Son of man himself, even that Jesus, “who had been dead, but was living again, and was

alive for evermore^a." This glorious person appeared to John in a manner suited to the characters and circumstances of the different Churches; and in the epistles, written to them, reference is continually made to this description of him. He is here described in his *situation*, *habit*, *appearance*, *voice*, and *attitude*.

1. In his *situation*.—There was in the temple a golden candlestick with seven lamps, to which it was the priest's office to attend^b. This candlestick, which on account of the number of the lamps is considered as seven, represented the seven Churches of Proconsular Asia: and "the Son of man standing in the midst of them," denoted, that he inspected the state of Churches and individuals, to observe how their light shone, to replenish them occasionally with fresh supplies of his Spirit, and, by seasonable trials in a way of providence or of grace, to trim them, as it were, whensoever their dimness called for his special interposition.

2. In his *habit*.—The garments which he wore were such as were appointed for the high-priest^c: and by this clothing he intimated, that, though he was in glory, he still executed the priestly office, presenting his blood before the mercy-seat, and "ever living to make intercession for his people." He would have it known to the Church that he is "a Priest upon his throne^d."

3. In his *appearance*.—This was august beyond all expression or conception. His hoary "head," denoting both his majesty and wisdom, marked him out as "the Ancient of days^e." His fiery "eyes" evinced, that he searched the heart and tried the reins, and penetrated the inmost recesses of the soul. His "feet" of fine and burning brass intimated, that, as all his steps were holy, so was his procedure firm and irresistible. His "countenance," shining as the meridian sun, displayed his excellency and glory, and his worthiness of universal love.

4. In his *voice*.—This, which was terrible, like the roaring of the tempestuous ocean, shewed, that, however his words had formerly been disregarded, it became all to attend to them with the deepest humility.

5. In his *attitude*.—He "held in his hand seven stars," (which represented the ministers of the seven Churches^f;) and thereby intimated, that all ministers were under his direction and controul, and that they ought to shine for the good of men without regarding their menaces or assaults, since under his protection they could not but be safe. At the same time, emitting "from his mouth a sharp two-edged sword," he

^a ver. 18.

^b Exod. xxv. 31, 32.

^c Exod. xxviii. 4.

^d Zech. vi. 13.

^e Dan. vii. 9.

^f ver. 20.

declared his power and determination to subdue his enemies, and either to subject them to himself as vessels of mercy, or to cut them asunder as monuments of his indignation^g.]

2. The effect of the vision—

[On almost all occasions the appearance even of an angel has produced much fear and terror in the minds of those to whom he came: no wonder therefore that such an effect should flow from the appearance of God himself. Manoah concluded that he must die, because he had seen God face to face^h. Ezekielⁱ, Daniel^k, and Paul^l fell down before him, unable to sustain the brightness of his glory. Once indeed man could converse with his Maker face to face: but, since the introduction of sin into the world, he has been intimidated by a sense of guilt, and incapacitated for so high an honour; insomuch that the most beloved of all Christ's Disciples was overwhelmed at the sight of him, and "fell at his feet as dead."]

Not to insist any longer on the circumstances of the vision, we shall,

II. Deduce from it some pertinent observations—

1. They who suffer much for their Lord may expect peculiar manifestations of his power and love—

[John was now in banishment: yet, though suffering much by reason of hardships and privations, he was infinitely happier than Domitian on his throne. St. Paul also found, that, "as his afflictions abounded, so also did his consolations." Thus it shall be with all who suffer for righteousness' sake. What then have they to fear? Need they regard the reproaches of men, when they are so highly honoured by their God? Need they be concerned about losses, when they are enriched with such invaluable communications? Need they fear stripes, or imprisonment, when their trials may lead to such manifestations as these? — — —]

2. We have reason to be thankful that our Lord reveals himself to us now through the medium of men, and of the written word—

[We see from the example before us how much we should be disconcerted by visions; and how unfit they would be, as stated means, of edifying the Church. But when God speaks to us by the instrumentality of men, we can attend with ease, and weigh with care whatever is brought to our ears. It is true, indeed, that many take occasion from this circumstance

^g Rev. ii. 16.

^h Judg. xiii. 22.

ⁱ Ezek. i. 28.

^k Dan. x. 8, 9.

^l Acts ix. 4.

to despise the word, when otherwise they would tremble at it: but, on the other hand, myriads are “drawn to God by the cords of a man,” who otherwise would only have brought upon themselves, like Pharaoh, an aggravated condemnation. Let us then improve this privilege; and, however weak God’s instruments may be, let us attend to them with reverence, that his agency may be rendered visible in our experience^m — — —]

3. The brighter discoveries we have of Christ, the more shall we be humbled in the dust before him—

[The appearances of God to man have at all times tended to the humbling of their souls. Abraham and Moses no sooner caught a sight of him, than they hid their faces, from a consciousness of their own extreme unworthiness: and Job, though one of the most perfect of men, confessed himself “vile,” and “abhorred himself in dust and ashesⁿ.” Even the seraphim before the throne make use of their wings to veil their faces and their feet, and confess thereby that they are unworthy either to serve or to behold their God^o. And would not a view of the Lord in his glory make us also to cry out, “Woe is me, I am unclean^p!” Yes: a discovery of created things may puff us up: but a sight of God himself cannot but abase us in the dust — — —]

4. There is a day coming when the most stout-hearted sinner will tremble before him—

[If John, who had lain in the bosom of his Lord, and had seen him transfigured on the holy mount, and was in himself so eminently holy, so highly beloved; if he fell at the Redeemer’s feet as dead, what will the ungodly do in the day of judgment? If, when God spake from Mount Sinai, the Israelites were so terrified as to desire that he would speak to them no more in such a way; and “Moses himself exceedingly quaked and feared;” how shall not the wicked tremble in that day, when Jesus shall appear in all his glory to judge the world? Let them laugh now if they will: but they will soon “call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb.” O that to-day, while it is called to-day, they would hear his voice, and no more harden their hearts against him!]

^m 2 Cor. iv. 7.

^o Isai. vi. 2.

ⁿ Job xlii. 5, 6.

^p Isai. vi. 5.

MMCCCCLXXX.

CHRIST'S POWER OVER THE INVISIBLE WORLD.

Rev. i. 17, 18. *Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

MAN, while he continued in a state of innocence, communed freely with his Maker face to face: but from the time that sin entered into the world, he has dreaded the presence of the Most High, and fled from it with fear and trembling. Whenever God has been pleased to appear to any of his people, the sight has uniformly filled them with terror; and, in some instances, almost deprived them even of life. This was the effect produced by a vision vouchsafed to John. Our blessed Lord, in a habit somewhat resembling that of the high-priest, revealed himself to his beloved Disciple: and so august was his appearance, that John, unable to endure the sight, fell at his feet as dead. But our Lord, in condescension to his weakness, dispelled his fears by making known to him the perfections of his nature, and the offices which in his mediatorial capacity he sustained.

In discoursing on his words we shall consider,

I. Our Lord's record concerning himself—

A more glorious description of Jesus is not to be found in all the sacred writings: he declares himself to be,

1. The eternal God—

[The terms, “the first and the last,” are intended to express eternity^a: and, in this view, it is an incommunicable attribute of Jehovah. It is often used to describe God in places where he contrasts himself with the gods of the heathen^b: and it always characterizes him as infinitely superior to all creatures. But Jesus here arrogates it to himself. Eternity had been ascribed to him both by Prophets and Apostles^c: but he here claims it himself as his own prerogative; for, notwithstanding he was in the form of a servant, he thought it

^a ver. 8, 11. and Rev. xxii. 13.

^b Isai. xlv. 6.

^c Prov. viii. 22—30. Mic. v. 2. John i. 1. Heb. xiii. 8.

not robbery to be equal with God^d. Hence then it is evident that Jesus is one with the Father, "in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal," God over all, blessed for evermore^e.]

2. The living Saviour—

[He, whose brightness now exceeded that of the meridian sun, once hung upon the cross. But, says he, "*though*^f I was dead, yet I am the living One^g, possessed of life in myself^h, and the source of life to others; and immutably living, to carry on the work which I began on earth." "Behold" this with wonder, yet with a full assurance of its truth; for I, the "Amen," "the true and faithful Witness, declare it unto thee." Now as the former assertion shews us what he was in his divine nature, this informs us what he is in his mediatorial office. "He died for our offences, and rose again for our justification;" and is, not only our advocate with the Fatherⁱ, but the head of vital influence to all that believe^k.]

The universal Sovereign—

[By "hell" we are to understand, not the habitation of the damned only, but the whole invisible world: and "death" is the door of introduction to it. Now to "have the keys" of these, is to have the power over them, together with the entire appointment of men's states in reference to them^l. And this power does Jesus exercise. Whomsoever he will, and in whatever time or manner he sees fit, he consigns to death, and fixes instantly in heaven or hell: "He openeth and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth^m." Hence it appears that every event in this world also must be under his controul; and consequently, that he is the universal Sovereign.]

From the encouraging address which accompanied this record, we are led to consider,

II. Its tendency to comfort and support the soul—

When a similar vision was vouchsafed to Daniel, its effects, which were also similar, were counteracted in the same mannerⁿ. Now this record of our Lord was well calculated to dissipate the fears of John; and may well also be a comfort to us,

1. Under apprehensions of temporal calamities—

[Impending dangers and distresses will often excite terror, and overwhelm the soul with anxious dread. But what ground

^d Phil. ii. 6.

^e Rom. ix. 5.

^f Καὶ.

^g Ὁ ζῶν.

^h John v. 26.

ⁱ Rom. viii. 34.

^k Eph. i. 22, 23.

^l Isai. xxii. 22.

^m Rev. iii. 7.

ⁿ Dan. x. 5—12.

of fear can he have, who has the eternal God for his refuge? What injury can arise to him, whose soul is in the Redeemer's hands, and for whose benefit all things are ordered both in heaven and earth? "Not a hair of his head can perish" but by special commission from his best Friend. "Thousands may fall beside him, and ten thousand at his right hand;" but "no weapon that is formed against him can prosper." If his eyes were opened to behold his real situation, he might see himself encompassed with horses of fire, and chariots of fire^o: and, standing as in an impregnable fortress, he might defy the assaults of men or devils. If his God and Saviour be for him, none can be against him^p.]

2. Under fears of eternal condemnation—

[No man can reflect upon his own character without feeling that he deserves the wrath of God: and every one that is sensible of his own demerits, must tremble lest the judgments he has deserved should be inflicted on him. Yet a just view of the Saviour may dispel his fears, and cause him to "rejoice with joy unspeakable." Does his guilt appear too great to be forgiven? He that offered an atonement for it, is the eternal God^q. Do doubts arise respecting his acceptance with the Father? Behold, that very Jesus who made atonement for him, ever liveth to plead it as his advocate, and to present it before the mercy-seat^r. Do death and hell appal him with their terrors? they are altogether subject to the controul of Jesus, whose power and faithfulness are pledged for the salvation of all his ransomed people^s. To the weakest then we say in the name of this adorable Saviour, "Fear not:" though thou art "a worm, thou shalt thresh the mountains^t;" and though thou art the smallest grain that has been gathered from the field, thou shalt be treasured safely in the granary of thy heavenly Father^u.]

APPLICATION—

[We cannot conclude the subject without applying it to those who are ignorant of Christ. Surely we must not say to you "Fear not;" but rather, "Fear and tremble," for he whom ye have despised is the eternal God; and ever liveth to put down his enemies, and to make them his footstool. He has only, as it were, to turn the key of the invisible world, and your souls will be locked up in the prison from whence there is no redemption. O consider this, ye that live unmindful of this adorable Saviour; and prostrate yourselves at his feet, while his offers of mercy are yet extended to you.]

^o 2 Kings vi. 17.

^p Rom. viii. 31.

^q Acts xx. 28.

^r 1 John i. 1, 2.

^s John x. 28, 29.

^t Isai. xli. 10, 14, 15.

^u Amos. ix. 9.

MMCCCCLXXXI.

EPISTLE TO EPHESUS.

Rev. ii. 1, 2. *Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlestick; I know thy works.*

IN the foregoing chapter, the description given of our blessed Lord has been considered in one connected and comprehensive view. But, in the different epistles, a portion of that character is selected, as appropriate to the subject-matter of each: and it is of great importance, therefore, that we consider every portion by itself, in order that we may obtain a more accurate knowledge of him, and have our minds more deeply impressed with a sense of his transcendent excellency and glory. It is with this view that I now confine myself to the words which I have just read: and, if they appear at first sight uninteresting, as not having any practical bearing upon our conduct, we shall soon find that they are indeed most instructive to our minds, and are well calculated to be influential also on our hearts and lives.

The city of Ephesus being the capital of the province of the Lesser Asia, and the nearest also to the Isle of Patmos, where John was now a prisoner for the Lord's sake, the first epistle was written to the Church in that place. The substance of the epistle will be considered in our next discourse. At present, we notice only the character of our blessed Lord, as stated in the introduction to it. In this is set forth his interest in all the Churches, and his constant care,

I. For the protection of his ministers—

In the close of the last chapter, the mystery contained in the seven stars which John saw in the right hand of Jesus, and of the seven golden candlesticks amidst which he walked, is explained. The seven stars represented the angels or ministers of the seven

Churches; and the seven candlesticks represented the seven Churches themselves^a.

Now, ministers are not unfitly compared to “stars”—

[They are fixed in their respective orbits by God himself: yet have they no proper lustre of their own: they shine by a borrowed light; and reflect the glory of the Sun of Righteousness, from whom alone all light proceeds: “Christ is that true light, which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world^b. They are, however, of the greatest service to mankind, in that they shine in the midst of darkness, and are useful to conduct the mariner over the tempestuous and trackless deep, to his desired haven — — —]

But the very light which they reflect exposes them to many and great dangers—

[Those whose light is the brightest, and whose efficiency is most amply displayed, have been always most opposed, both by men and devils. Against whom did men ever combine with such unanimity and malignity as against our Lord Jesus Christ? or whom did all the powers of darkness ever so labour to destroy? After him, his Apostles were the great objects of their combined hostility: nor was there any effort which these enemies did not make for their destruction. Thus also it has been in every age: those who have most resembled Christ and his Apostles have, on account of their superior light, been most exposed to the assaults of those who have “loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” — — —]

Our blessed Saviour, however, “holds them all in his right hand”—

[He protects them against the assault of every enemy. Numberless as were the efforts made to destroy both Peter and Paul, none could prevail against them, till they had completed and fulfilled the work assigned them. “Satan would have sifted Peter as wheat;” and would have winnowed him away as chaff, if “our blessed Lord had not prayed for him, that his faith might not ultimately fail.” And Paul would have sunk under the pressure of “the thorn in his flesh, the messenger of Satan that was sent to buffet him,” if our blessed Lord had not supplied him with “grace sufficient for him.” And who amongst the servants of the Lord would ever have been able to stand, if “He who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand” (the hand of power) had not upheld them? But, as strengthened by him, the very weakest of men is strong, and may set at defiance all his enemies; not all of

^a Rev. i. 20.

^b John i. 9.

whom combined “can ever pluck them out of his hand^c.” Our blessed Lord, whilst holding them in his hand, bids them shine: and every one of them is immortal, till his work is done^d.]

The same incessant care also does our Lord exercise,

II. For the edification of his people—

The Churches are compared to “candlesticks”—

[There was in the tabernacle a candlestick of pure gold, having seven lamps, which burned continually, to give light in that holy place^e. And fitly did this represent the saints, into whom our great High-priest has poured the oil of his grace^f, and whose souls he has kindled by that sacred fire that came down from heaven. “They shine as lights in the dark world, hold forth to all around them the word of life^g.”]

Amidst these our great High-priest walks, to keep them from extinction or decay—

[It was the office of Aaron and his sons to keep these lamps ever burning^h; furnishing them from time to time with fresh oil; and trimming them, as occasion required, with “the golden snuffers.” And thus does our great High-priest inspect his Church and people; supplying their every want, and administering to them such correction as their necessities require. Without his care, where is there in the universe a lamp that would not have been extinguished long ago? Peradventure we may have sometimes been ready to complain of the afflictions which we have been called to sustain. But the truth is, that these have been as the pruning-knife in the hand of the husbandman, or rather as the snuffers in the hand of him who superintends the lamps. Nor is it written in vain, that “the snuffers were of goldⁱ,” for every visitation, whether in providence or in grace, which subserves our spiritual and eternal interests, is invaluable; and should be so regarded, even whilst we are writhing under its immediate pressure. We should always bear in mind the end for which our pains are inflicted. God is not like an earthly parent, who may chastise us for his own pleasure and caprice: no, he always “chastens us for our profit, that we may, in a more enlarged measure, be partakers of his holiness^k.”]

Do we not then here SEE,

1. Our indispensable duty?

^c John x. 28.

^d John vii. 30. and viii. 20.

^e Exod. xxv. 31, 37.

^f Tit. iii. 5, 6.

^g Phil. ii. 15, 16.

^h Exod. xxvii. 20, 21.

ⁱ Exod. xxv. 38.

^k Heb. xii. 10.

[Yes; whether ministers or people, our duty is to shine; to shine for the benefit of others, and for the honour of our God. Of the former I forbear to speak, any further than to bear my testimony to this, that the Lord Jesus Christ alone has enabled me to set the true light before you, and has preserved me in my station to this hour. What St. Paul said before Agrippa, I hope I may say before you, that "having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day¹, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come^m." But to you I say, Remember the end for which the Lord Jesus Christ has imparted his Holy Spirit to your souls, and has watched over you with such incessant care: it is, that you should shine, and that "your light should shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day." The lamps of the candlestick were seen only by those who were within the tabernacle: but your light must shine before the whole world. The command is, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heavenⁿ." Deprecate, therefore, nothing that may increase your splendour: but put yourselves unreservedly into the hands of your Great High-priest, that he may administer to your necessities as his wisdom shall direct, and advance his own glory by whatever means he shall judge most conducive to that end.]

2. Our most exalted privilege—

[Whether it be protection or advancement that we need, we are in the best hands, and under the care of unerring wisdom. Christ has said, "He will be with us even to the end of the world^o," and we are living witnesses to the truth of his word: for it is owing to his presence with us that "neither the power nor the policy of hell have ever yet been able to prevail against us." Remember, "He has within himself all fulness treasured up for us:" yes, "He has the residue of the Spirit," which he will pour out in richer abundance upon you, in proportion as you confide in him, and desire to promote his glory. And for your satisfaction know, that "he neither slumbers nor sleeps," as did the high-priests of old, but is ever watchful over you for good. Lay aside, then, all care; and leave to him "the perfecting of that which concerns you." Only be concerned to be "burning and shining lights" in your day and generation^p; and look forward to the time when, through his tender care, your office shall be fulfilled, and, your place of service being changed, you shall "shine above the stars in the firmament for ever and ever^q."]

¹ Nearly forty-four years.

ⁿ Matt. v. 16.

^p John v. 35.

^m Acts xxvi. 22.

^o Matt. xviii. 20. and xxviii. 20.

^q Dan. xii. 3.

MMCCCCLXXXII.

EPISTLE TO EPHESUS.

Rev. ii. 2—6. *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil : and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars : and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.*

THE epistles to the seven Churches of Asia are not only instructive in a general view, like other portions of Holy Writ ; but have this excellence peculiar to themselves, that they set before us a vast diversity of experience in all its modifications of good and evil, and teach us what judgment our blessed Lord will pass on the complex character at the last day. If we wanted to know how much of good we may possess, and yet be on the whole evil in the sight of God ; and how far we may go towards heaven, and yet fall short of it at last ; I know not that we could select any portion of the sacred oracles that would give us such definite information as that which I have now read to you. In it our blessed Lord enters into a complete view of the Ephesian Church ; to whom he here sends,

I. His commendation—

Three things he notices with approbation ; their *unwearied labour*, their *invincible patience*, and their *discriminating zeal*—

[Much had the members of the Ephesian Church laboured to fulfil the will of God. In truth, it cannot be fulfilled without great and continued labour. The metaphors by which religion is set forth in Holy Writ clearly declare, that we cannot advance one step towards heaven without great labour. To “enter in at the strait gate” for the beginning of our

course, we must “not only seek, but strive.” “Seeking alone will not suffice: we must put forth all our powers, as we should in a race, a wrestling, or a warfare: and then only can we hope to succeed in religion, when we engage in it with all our might.”

Moreover, “if we set ourselves to seek the Lord, we must prepare our souls for temptation.” Both men and devils will exert themselves to defeat our efforts: and we shall need all imaginable patience to sustain their diversified assaults. Now the Church at Ephesus had approved themselves well in these respects, and had “borne without fainting” all the afflictions which had been laid upon them.

In these respects, too, they had been animated by the only motive that could make their service acceptable: they had done all, and suffered all, from a regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, “whose name” they had endeavoured to exalt and glorify.

Our blessed Lord further mentions, with approbation, the care which the Ephesian Church had taken to examine the pretensions of those who assumed to themselves an apostolic authority, and the firmness with which they had withstood every effort that had been made to introduce amongst them either error in principle or corruption in practice.]

In all this we see what the Christian world at large should be, if they would approve themselves to their Lord and Saviour—

[They must, even under the most trying circumstances, persist in obeying his commands; and must resolutely withstand all who would divert them from their purpose, or in any way shake their fidelity to Christ — — —

But here let me call your attention to somewhat which may have escaped your notice, and which deserves particular remark. In mentioning with approbation the things which the Ephesian Church had done for his name, he recurs again and again to the same point; as if he felt peculiar pleasure and delight in recording any thing which was done for him; even though, on the whole, the demerit of the person so preponderated, as to render him unworthy of his final acceptance. This observation extends to what was spoken of their labour and patience, and also in a peculiar manner to what was specified respecting their jealous and discriminating zeal^a. And from hence we learn the marvellous condescension of our blessed Lord; as also *the duty incumbent on all his followers, not to dwell more than is absolutely necessary on the faults of others, but to expatiate with delight on their virtues*, even though we cannot but condemn them on the whole.]

^a Examine the text carefully in this view, especially ver. 2, and 6.

This commendation had a powerful tendency to prepare them for,

II. His reproof^b—

One would have thought that persons so eminent in their outward conduct could not merit any severe reproof: but,

“They had left their first love”—

[Once they were full of love to Christ; and *that* had for a season been the spring and source of all their obedience. But now “their love was waxed cold;” and their obedience was become rather a dictate of their understanding than the fruit of genuine love. As far as was visible to man, their lives were nearly the same as in their better days: but He who searches the heart saw an immense difference; there being now almost a total want of that principle which once animated and inspired their whole conduct.]

Now this, in whomsoever it is found, is a tremendous evil—

[Some there are who regard a relaxation of their first love as a matter necessarily to be expected, and as a mark of growth rather than decay. But this idea is far from being sanctioned in our text: on the contrary, it is adduced as a ground of deep complaint, and as an evil that outweighed all that had been commended. In truth, so offensive is it to the Lord, that nothing that can either be done or suffered for him, can be accepted of him, whilst he sees a decline in our affections towards him. Even amongst men, this judgment would be passed upon it. If a man found his wife's regards alienated from him, he would make no account of all her services, however diligent she might be in her attention to her outward duties. And certainly God, when he says, “Give me thine heart,” will be satisfied with nothing less: and to withdraw our affections from him, after having once placed them upon him, will be accounted by him a greater indignity, than if we had never made any profession of love to him at all.]

It is true, indeed, that persons may *appear* to have declined in love towards him, when there has been no real diminution of their regards. A wife may not continue through her whole life to feel precisely towards her husband as she did on the day of her espousals, and yet have grown, rather than declined, in love towards him: what arose from novelty and the animal spirits, may have worn off; and yet there may

^b Every one, in administering reproof, will do well to attend to this.

be in her such an accession of higher and deeper feelings, as infinitely to overbalance any apparent loss : her esteem for him altogether, her oneness of heart with him, and her entire devotion to him, may have greatly increased: in a word, "her love may have increased in knowledge and in all judgment," whilst to a superficial observer, who judged of it only by some sensible emotions, it might be thought to have decayed. So it may be with a believer towards his God — — — But, if there be real cause to say of him, that "he has left his first love," I hesitate not to affirm, that, if he repent not, "it were better for him never to have loved his God at all, than, after having loved him, to decline from him," and to transfer to the creature the regards that are due to him alone^c.]

To this reproof, our Lord mercifully vouchsafed to add,

III. His counsel—

All such decay as this must be repented of—

[Not only must it not be justified, but it must be mourned over with deeply penitential sorrow. In order to see the evil and bitterness of such a state, it is well to call to mind the love of our espousals, and to compare with it the formal services which we now render to our God. Once, how precious were the public ordinances, in which the soul finds now but little profit! In secret, too, how sweet was the word of God; how deep the penitential sorrow which was stirred by it; and how unspeakably blessed were the promises on which his soul rested, and on which he founded all his hope before God! With what strong crying and tears, also, did he frequently draw nigh to God; whereas, now, his prayers are become little better than a lifeless form! Now this melancholy change should be brought distinctly to our view: we should "remember from whence we are fallen," and, by a comparison of our former with our fallen state, endeavour to produce in our souls the humiliation which the occasion calls for. In a word, we must, in the review of our past lives, be filled with shame, and sorrow, and contrition.]

Yet will not repentance suffice, if it be not accompanied with a cordial return to all our former habits—

[This is of extreme importance to all who have departed from their God. They are ready to imagine, that, if they be humbled under a sense of their declensions, they shall be accepted of God. And doubtless, if they have no time to shew,

^c 2 Pet. ii. 21.

by newness of life, the sincerity of their repentance, we may hope that God's mercy shall be extended to them. But, if we would approve ourselves to God, we must go back to our former habits, and "do our first works," and "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." If reformation without contrition will be of no avail, so neither will contrition without an entire change both of heart and life. To every backslidden soul, then, is this counsel given: and if there be one who does not duly follow it, God says to him, "I will come to thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." From an entire Church will our Lord withdraw the light, if the members of it generally become remiss: and from an individual, even whilst his blessing is continued to the Church at large, he will withhold that supply of oil which he has neglected to implore. My brethren, see to what the Seven Churches of Asia have long since been reduced! or see what is the state of many individuals in the Christian Church, who once professed much love, and appeared to have attained considerable eminence in the divine life! Many a Demas may be found at this day; and many, who, if with the stony-ground hearers they have not renounced all profession of religion, yet with those of the thorny-ground, they "bring forth no fruit to perfection." To all, then, who have thus declined from God, I would say, "Repent, and do your first works:" for you know not how "*quickly*" you may be left in utter and everlasting darkness. Repent then, I say; and, whereinsoever you at any time have served your God aright, endeavour to "abound more and more."]

I cannot CONCLUDE without calling the attention of *those who have never yet experienced what is here characterized by the expressive designation of "a first love."*

[How many of you, my brethren, have never known "a day of espousals" to the Lord Jesus Christ^d! Say, my dear brethren, whether you have ever seen in Christ an excellency that far eclipsed all created good, and made you desire him for your friend and your everlasting portion? Say, whether you have ever given up yourselves to him, as his bride, and found all your happiness in him alone? Say, whether fellowship with him has been your chief joy? If not, what must be your state before him? If the Church at Ephesus, who had done so much and suffered so much for him, and felt such a jealousy for his honour, yet needed to repent because they had left their first love, have not *you* cause for repentance, who have never yet loved and served him at all, but have

^d Jer. ii. 2.

even chosen for your friends the very persons whose principles and whose practice he utterly abhors? Yes, indeed, you must “repent, and be altogether converted,” and “become new creatures in Christ Jesus;” or you can never hope to be acknowledged by him, as his bride, in the eternal world. If “the light of the righteous rejoiceth, the lamp of the wicked shall assuredly be put out^e.]

^e Prov. xiii. 9.

MMCCCLXXXIII.

EPISTLE TO EPHESUS.

Rev. ii. 7. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

THOUGH all the seven Churches of Asia Minor are separately addressed in a way suited to their respective states, yet what is spoken to them may fitly be applied to all other Churches, so far as their states agree with those which are here portrayed. And we the rather say this, because at the close of every epistle the same admonition is repeated; “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear”—not what the Spirit saith unto this or that particular Church, but “what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.” And here you cannot but perceive, that, though the Lord Jesus is represented as dictating all the epistles, it is by his Holy Spirit that he dictates them: for, in every one of them you are called to receive “what *the Holy Spirit* saith unto the Churches.” Nor can you fail to notice, that, in every one of the epistles, the promises are made to those only who overcome. It will be proper, therefore, especially in this first epistle, that we distinctly consider,

I. The character to whom the promise is made—

The whole of the Christian life is a state of conflict—

[This appears most strongly marked in this address to the Church of Ephesus. The very terms “labour and patience” clearly shew that they had had much to *do*, and much to *suffer*,

and much to *maintain in continued exercise*. And who needs be told how great a labour it is to “mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts,” and to “run with patience the race that is set before us?” or, who needs to be informed, that persecution is hard to bear, even though we be not “called to resist unto blood?” The hatred and contempt of the world, and, above all, of our own friends and relatives, are far from pleasing to flesh and blood: and yet there is no child of God that can escape this minor sacrifice, even though he be not exposed to suffer loss in respect of his life or liberty. A person floating down the stream is unconscious of the rapidity of a current; but if he have to swim against the stream, he finds it no easy matter to proceed. So the persons who are content to move with the world, find little difficulty in their way; but those who will resist the world, and the flesh, and the devil, shall find that they have a continual conflict to maintain; and more especially when they attempt to “keep themselves in the love of God^a.” One would think, that, considering what mercies we experience every day and hour at the Lord’s hands, it would be no difficult matter to preserve upon our souls a becoming sense of his love. But the heart is sadly prone to backslide from God. To avoid any thing grossly evil, and to persevere in the observance of outward duties, is comparatively easy: but to walk with God, to set ourselves as in his immediate presence, to preserve throughout the day habitual fellowship with him, to have our souls so filled with love to him as to regard nothing but his approbation, and to do nothing but for his glory, *this* is a state of mind which it is extremely difficult to maintain. But]

To those only who overcome in this conflict are the promises made—

[To “run well for a season” only, will avail us nothing: on the contrary, if at any time we cease to press forward, “our latter end will be worse than our beginning.” The same occasion for conflict will exist as long as we continue in the body; and every victory should encourage our efforts for still further conquests. We must “never be weary in well-doing: for then only shall we reap, if,” during the season appointed for our labour, “we faint not.” “We must endure unto the end,” if ever we would be saved.]

Nor will this appear a hard condition, if we duly consider,

II. The promise itself—

From the tree of life in Paradise were our first parents, and all their posterity, shut out—

^a Jude, ver. 21.

[Our first parents were permitted to eat of the tree of life: and it was to them a pledge of eternal life, as long as they should retain their innocence, and live obedient to their God. But, when they had sinned, this was no longer a pledge of life to them: and they, in going to it any longer under that character, would only have deceived their own souls. Hence God drove them out of Paradise; and set cherubims, with a flaming sword, at the entrance of the garden, to prevent their return to it, and to keep them especially from the tree of life^b. Not that God intended wholly and eternally to cut them off from all hopes of life. On the contrary, he revealed to them, that One should in due time spring from the woman, and effect, both for them and their posterity, a deliverance from the evils in which they were involved. He told them, that "the Seed of the woman should enter the lists with their great adversary, and bruise the serpent's head." True, indeed, he should himself die in the conflict; but "through death he should destroy him who had the power of death, and deliver those" whom that powerful adversary had enslaved.]

Through that adorable Saviour is there a way of access once more opened to the tree of life—

[The tree of life now grows in the paradise that is above. It is "a tree that bears twelve manner of fruits^c," suited to every appetite, and sufficient for us under every state and condition of life. Even "the very leaves of it are effectual for the healing of all the nations of the world^d." To that, even in this world, may every valiant soldier have access; and from it shall he derive all that support to his soul which it afforded to our first parents in their state of innocence: and every fruit that he gathers from it shall be to him a pledge that he shall eternally enjoy all the blessings of salvation: yes, even here shall it be to him "an earnest of his everlasting inheritance." My dear brethren, this privilege is ours, if we fight a good fight; and when we have finally vanquished our spiritual enemies, we shall go and sit under the shadow of this tree to all eternity. O! who can conceive the exquisiteness of the flavour of its fruits, when we shall gather them in the immediate presence of our God? Who shall say what it is to see our God face to face; what, to hear and taste the expressions of his love; what, to behold and participate his glory? And who can conceive what a zest it will give to all our joys, to know that they are secured to us for ever; and that, when once we are in that paradise, we shall go no more out? Well: *this*, believer, is held forth to thee as the reward of victory: and it shall surely be accorded to thee, if thou hold out unto

^b Gen. iii. 22—24.

^c Rev. xxii. 2.

^d Rev. xxii. 2.

the end. Only "be faithful unto death, and God will give thee the crown of life."]

APPLICATION—

Let me, however, offer to thee a salutary caution :

1. Learn to have just views of your reward—

[The reward is held forth to those who overcome. But you must not overlook the terms in which the promise is made: "To him that overcometh *will I give.*" Eternal life is the gift of God, from first to last. "Death is the *wages* of sin; but eternal life is the *gift of God*, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Our being called to maintain a conflict does not render it at all the less a free gift: our conflicts can never *merit* it; they can only prepare us for it, even as a medicinal process may prepare the body for the enjoyment of perfect health. When our Lord said, "Labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life," he added, "which the Son of man shall *give* unto you." The gift will not be the less free because we labour for it; but, by the imposing of that condition, a distinction is made which to all eternity will justify God in the bestowment of his gifts. Never, then, imagine that your conflicts, however arduous, will *deserve* life: they will only "render you meet for" the enjoyment of heaven; and evince, that, in the communication of his blessings, God does put a difference between the evil and the good. If it be said, that "they who do God's commandments are said to have a *right* to the tree of life^e," I grant it: but it is a right founded only on the promise of your God. Your *merit*, in your best estate, is found only in hell: it is the grace of God alone that exalts any soul of man to heaven.]

2. Never relax your efforts for the obtaining of it—

[Unhappily, many are but little aware what enemies they have to contend with. Men are extremely blind to their besetting sins. All of us discover this *in others*: but few are conscious of it *in themselves*. This, then, I would say to you: Learn, from the very weaknesses of others, to distrust yourselves: and beg of God to shew you what are those peculiar lusts which you are most concerned to discover and withstand in your own hearts. It is very painful to see how grievously persons, on the whole pious, often fail in some particular disposition or habit. We all take too partial a view of our duty: and not a few remain so much under the power of some unsubdued corruption, that we are constrained to doubt what

^e Rev. xxii. 14.

their state will be in the eternal world. I must, therefore, entreat you all to search out your besetting sin; and to "fight, as it were, neither with small nor great, but with the king of Israel." If you overcome your enemy on that point, there will be little doubt of your vanquishing him on every other. But remember, the conflict must be maintained even to the end; and then only must you put off your armour, when God calls you from this field of battle, to the full enjoyment of your reward.]

MMCCCCLXXXIV.

EPISTLE TO SMYRNA.

Rev. ii. 8, 9. *Unto the angel of the Church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works.*

SMYRNA was at that time, next to Ephesus, the largest city in the Proconsular Asia. As in the former epistle we made the description of our blessed Lord a distinct subject for our consideration, so we shall do also in this epistle to Smyrna; deferring to another opportunity the subject matter of the epistle itself, except so far as the mention of it is necessary to the elucidation of our Lord's character. The points which we propose to notice are,

I. The description given of our blessed Lord—

There are two things spoken of him; the one denoting his Godhead, the other his manhood.

He is "the first and the last"—

[Now, I would ask, Whom can these words designate, but the eternal and immutable Jehovah? In the Scriptures of the Old Testament he frequently describes himself by these very terms: "Who raised up the righteous man from the east, gave nations before him, and made him rule over kings? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am He^a." Again he says of himself, "Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am He: I am the first, I also am the last^b." If it could be supposed that any but Jehovah should be the first source, and the last end of all, let another Scripture determine that point: "Thus saith the Lord (Jehovah), the King of

^a Isai. xli. 2, 4.

^b Isai. xlvi. 12.

Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord (Jehovah) of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God. Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any^c."]

He "was dead, and is alive"—

[This can refer to none but the Lord Jesus Christ, "who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification."

But it may be asked, How can these two agree? I answer, the former title is again and again given him in this book of Revelation^d: and it is also repeatedly given in conjunction with the latter title. In the former chapter, where a full and large description is given of the person who appeared to John, He said of himself to John, "Fear not: I am the first, and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." And, in my text, this is the very part of that description expressly selected to be addressed to the Church at Smyrna: "These things saith the first and the last, who was dead and is alive." Here the parts cannot possibly be separated: you may as well say, that "he who was dead" is a different person from him "who is alive," as disjoin, and apply to different persons, what is here said of him as God and as man. He is God and man in one person, "Emmanuel, God with us^e." He is the same person of whom the Prophet Isaiah spake, saying, "To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace^f."]

Now, to have a just view of him in this complex character, is of infinite importance. And, to bring the subject before you, I will shew,

II. The particular bearing which this description of our Lord has upon the main subject of the epistle—

In this epistle the Church of Smyrna is warned to expect bitter persecution; but the Saviour says to her, "*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.*" And in that precise part of his character which he brings before them, he says, in fact, 'To dispel all fear of your persecutors, bear in mind,

1. 'My all-controlling power—

[' "I am the first and the last:" your persecutors would have had no existence but for me; nor can they do any thing

^c Isai. xliv. 6, 8.

^e Matt. i. 23.

^d Rev. i. 8, 11. and xxii. 11.

^f Isai. ix. 6.

which shall not be over-ruled for my glory. The devil will stir up against you all his vassals; and they will lend themselves to him, as willing instruments to destroy you. But I will limit all their efforts; so that they shall not be able to effect any thing beyond what I will enable you to bear, and over-rule for your good.' To this precise effect he speaks to all his Church by the Prophet Isaiah: "Behold, they shall gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. (Thou art afraid of the weapons which they are now forming for thy destruction: but) Behold, *I have created* the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. (The very strength he is exerting, he derives from me: and I tell thee, that) No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper^g."]

2. 'The interest I take in thy welfare—

[“For thee I died; and for thee I live.” It was altogether for the purpose of expiating thy guilt, that I assumed thy nature, and expired upon the cross: and it was in order to carry on and perfect thy salvation, that I rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven; where now I live, as thine advocate and intercessor; yea, and live too as the head over all things, that I may accomplish, both in thee and for thee, all that thy necessities require. Reflect on this; and then say, whether, “having myself suffered, being tempted, I am not disposed to succour my tempted people^h,” and whether, having “all power committed to me in heaven and in earth,” “I will suffer any to pluck thee out of my handⁱ?” Are not my death and resurrection a sufficient *pledge* to you, that “none shall ever separate you from my love^k?” Place, then, your confidence in me; and know, that, however your enemies may look upon you as “sheep appointed for the slaughter,” you shall, *through me*, be “more than conquerors over all^l.”]

3. 'The honour and happiness that await thee—

[“Thou art “predestinated by my Father to be conformed to my image^m.” Behold me, then, “as dying, and as yet alive;” yea, as living for ever at the right hand of God. This is the process that is prepared for thee. Whether thou be carried to death, or only to prison, it shall be equally a step to thine advancement to the very throne which I now occupy. Only “suffer with me, and thou shalt surely reign with meⁿ,” and “be glorified together^o.” And, when thou seest how “I have endured the cross and despised the shame, and am set

^g Isai. liv. 15—17.

^h Heb. ii. 18.

ⁱ John x. 28.

^k Rom. viii. 34, 35.

^l Rom. viii. 36, 37.

^m Rom. viii. 29.

ⁿ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

^o Rom. viii. 17.

down at the right hand of God^p," wilt thou be afraid or ashamed to follow me? Look at the noble army of martyrs, who "loved not their lives unto death:" see them before the throne of God, and inquire how they came there. And my angel shall inform thee, "These all came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: *therefore* are they before the throne of God^q." Be thou, then, a follower of them, even of those who through faith and patience now inherit the promises. Thou seest how *I have recompensed their fidelity*; and to thee I say, "Be *thou* faithful unto death; and I will give thee a crown of life^r."]]

As a fit IMPROVEMENT of this subject, learn, my brethren—

1. To contemplate and to estimate the character of Christ—

[In circumstances of trial, we are too apt to contemplate only the power of our adversaries, or our own weakness; whereas we should look chiefly, if not exclusively, to Him who reigns on high, and orders every thing according to his own sovereign will and pleasure. For thus saith the Lord: "Say ye not, 'A confederacy,' to all those to whom this people shall say, 'A confederacy;' neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid: but sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be to you for a sanctuary^s." To act otherwise, is folly in the extreme. "Who art thou, that art afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker^t?" Only have worthy thoughts of thy Lord and Saviour, and thou mayest defy all the efforts that either men or devils can make against thee^u.]

2. To avail yourselves of his promised aid and support—

[He tells you, "I will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on me, because he trusteth in me^x." See how David was kept^y; and how Paul^z, and thousands of others who have trusted in him^a: and will not his grace be alike sufficient for you? Be it so, "You are weak. Then his strength shall be the more glorified in your weakness^b." But you are a mere "worm." Still fear not; for "though a worm, thou shalt thresh the mountains^c." But thou canst do nothing. Then

^p Heb. xii. 2.

^q Rev. vii. 14, 15.

^r ver. 10.

^s Isai. viii. 12—14.

^t Isai. li. 12, 13.

^u Isai. l. 7—9.

^x Isai. xxvi. 3.

^y Ps. xi. 1—4. *Cite this.*

^z Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Cite this also.

^a Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

^b 2 Cor. xii. 9.

^c Isai. xli. 14—16. *Cite the whole of this.*

trust in Him; and he will do all things. For this is his word to every believing soul; "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness^d."]]

^d Isai. xli. 10.

MMCCCCLXXXV.

EPISTLE TO SMYRNA.

Rev. ii. 9, 10. *I know thy works and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

THIS Church stands highly honoured amongst those to which the epistles were written: for no fault was found in them, nor any ground of complaint so much as intimated to them. Our Lord's address to them is altogether laudatory and encouraging. That we may enter into it more fully, let us consider,

I. His testimony respecting them—

In common with all the other Churches, he says to them, "I know thy works:" and then, in reference to their conduct, he gives his testimony,

1. In a way of direct affirmation—

["I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty: but thou art rich." Doubtless their sufferings had been great; for they had been reduced to the most abject "poverty," and were utterly destitute of all the comforts of life. (To interpret this "poverty" as relating in any respect to poverty of spirit, is quite contrary to the whole scope of the passage: for poverty of spirit, so far from standing in opposition to true riches, is itself the truest riches.) But, in the midst of all their distress, our Lord, whose judgment is altogether according to truth, declared them to be "rich." For, first, *they possessed faith*, as the principle of all their obedience, and as the root of all

their other graces. And could they, when possessing so inestimable a gift, be called *poor*? No; they possessed that which was of more worth than the whole world. It was truly a "precious faith," "more precious than gold," yea, than much fine gold^a. Next, *they enjoyed the favour of their God*. "As believers in Christ, they could not but have peace with God^b." Granting, then, that they had not a place where to lay *their head*, as far as it respected this world, could they be poor who were privileged to repose *their souls* in the bosom of their God? They *poor*, with all their sins forgiven, and their names recorded in the book of life! Abhorred be the thought! If they were even dying with hunger and thirst, they were truly rich. Further, *they enjoyed peace in their own souls*. Who can estimate to its full amount, the blessedness of having the testimony of our own conscience, that we are serving God aright? St. Paul himself reports it to have been to him a source of the sublimest joy^c: and to call a man poor when possessed of that, would be to betray an utter ignorance of "the true riches^d." Moreover, in addition to all their present happiness, *they were authorized to expect, in the eternal world, "a weight of glory" proportioned to their sufferings*. How could their present "afflictions appear any other than light and momentary," when they were the means of opening to their view such a prospect as this^e? What! *poor* with such "an inheritance—an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and never-fading, reserved for them in heaven; and they themselves reserved by God for it^f!" No: they were "rich," truly rich, unspeakably rich; rich in possession, and in reversion too.

2. In a way of most striking contrast—

[There were among them "some who said they were Jews, but were not; but rather were the synagogue of Satan." Whether these were Jews zealous for the law of Moses, or Christians who confounded Judaism with Christianity, we do not certainly know. The unbelieving Jews were bitter persecutors; and were ever ready to accuse even our Lord himself of blasphemy, because he called himself the Son of God, and arrogated to himself a power to forgive sins^g. St. Paul, previous to his conversion, may be taken as a sample of Jewish bigotry, and of the envenomed malice with which they persecuted the Church of God^h. He thought indeed, at the time, that he was "doing God serviceⁱ:" but when he came to have

^a 2 Pet. i. 1. and 1 Pet. i. 7.

^b Rom. v. 1.

^c 2 Cor. i. 12.

^d Luke xvi. 11.

^e 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

^f 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

^g Matt. ix. 3. John x. 36. Matt. xxvi. 65.

^h Acts ix. 1, 2. and xxvi. 10, 11.

ⁱ Acts xxvi. 9. with John xvi. 2.

an insight into his true character, he saw that "*He* was the blasphemer; and *not they*, whom he so injuriously persecuted^k." But it is more probable that the persons here spoken of were by profession Christians: for the terms "Jew" and "Israel" are often used as designating the people of God, even under the New-Testament dispensation^l. If there were lewd idolatrous Balaamites and Nicolaitanes among the churches, we may well suppose that there were also Judaizing Christians, who blended the Law with the Gospel, and utterly subverted the Gospel of Christ. Such persons, even "if they had been angels from heaven, were to be held accursed," as being, under a pretence of zeal for Moses, the most specious and successful agents of the devil^m. Now these persons "said they were Jews," and valued themselves highly on their zeal; and were quite "rich" in their own estimation; whilst they held in utter contempt their poor suffering fellow-Christians, who endured so much tribulation for their adherence to Christ. But, however different was the outward aspect of these two parties, their real state was the very reverse of that which it appeared to be: these latter, in the midst of all their outward prosperity were poor; but the former, in the midst of all their poverty, were rich.

Thus did our Lord's testimony exactly accord with what had been before declared by the Apostle Paul; who, "though poor, made many rich; and having nothing, yet possessed all thingsⁿ."]

Suited to this state was,

II. The encouragement he gave them—

They had already suffered much; and were about to suffer more for their Saviour's sake. And, as we observed in our last discourse, our blessed Lord sought, in this epistle, to arm them against their impending trials, and to strengthen them for their future conflicts. For this end, he assures them,

1. That their trials were all limited—

[Satan is the great adversary of Christ and his Church. Men are his instruments and agents (willing agents, no doubt): and in all they do, they do it as instigated by him: for it is "he who worketh in all the children of disobedience." But in all that he attempts, he is restrained by our adorable Lord, who suffers him to proceed only to such an extent as shall eventually subserve the welfare of those whom he is seeking

^k 1 Tim. i. 13.

^l Rom. ii. 29. and ix. 6.

^m Gal. i. 7—9. 2 Cor. xi. 13—15. ⁿ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

to destroy. Satan would have cast, *not some* of that Church, but *all*; *not into prison* only, but *into hell*; not for *ten days* only, but *for ever*; not *that they might be tried*, but *that they might perish*. But, as in the case of Job, whom he could not touch, either in his person or his property, till he had obtained leave from God^o; so in their case he was under the controul of an almighty power; and, in fact, “could have no power at all against the Church, except it were given him from above.”

Now this was most encouraging: for, whether we suppose the “ten days” to be of a longer or shorter duration, it was most consolatory to know, that the objects, the measure, the duration, and effect of Satan’s malice were all limited by the Saviour himself, who would “not suffer one of his little ones to perish^p,” or the weakest of his people to be ever “plucked out of his hands^q.” Being assured that they should “have no temptation without a way to escape^r,” and that “all which they might suffer should work together for their goods^s,” they had no occasion for fear, but might confidently “commit themselves to the hands of an all-powerful and faithful God^t.”]

2. That their sufferings should be rewarded—

[All he required of them was, “to be faithful unto death.” They must be “ready to meet either imprisonment or death^u,” as the occasion might require; desirous only “that the Lord Jesus should be magnified in them, whether by life or death^v.” Nor should they think much of this sacrifice; since he pledged himself to them that “he would give them a crown of life,” a reward far beyond their services; for their bliss should infinitely exceed all that they could suffer, and their honour infinitely surpass all the dishonour which they could by any means be called to endure. Could they survey such a prize as this, and not contend for it? Would they ever repent of their labours, when they should possess this recompence? Would they not even lothe themselves, that they should ever have contemplated, for a moment, the pains of martyrdom with any other thought than that of gratitude to God, who counts them worthy of so high an honour as that of laying down their lives for him^w? Such, then, was the encouragement given to the Church at that time: and such may every believing soul now take to himself; assured that, “if he suffer with Christ, he shall, to all eternity, reign with him^x.”]

To bring this whole subject home to your own bosoms, I ENTREAT you, brethren—

^o Job i. 12. and ii. 6. ^p Matt. xviii. 14.

^q John x. 28.

^r 1 Cor. x. 13.

^s Rom. viii. 28.

^t 1 Pet. iv. 19.

^u Acts xx. 24. and xxi. 13.

^x Phil. i. 20.

^v Phil. i. 29.

^w 2 Tim. ii. 12.

1. To form a correct estimate of earthly things—

[A carnal man, who should have seen the condition of the Rich Man in all his splendour, and of Lazarus in all his penury, would have formed a very different estimate of their respective states from that which our Lord has taught us to form in a view of the Church at Smyrna. But I must say, that Lazarus was the rich man, whilst the man rolling in his wealth was poor. But suppose, from being as wealthy as Dives, you are reduced, by persecutors, to the state of Lazarus; shall I *then* call you “rich?” Yes, in all your poverty, I will say, “Thou art rich.” Let me state a case that shall illustrate this. Suppose that all you possessed in the world was a bag of copper coin; and that an enemy should come and rob you of it by handfuls; but that for every handful of copper that your enemy should take from you, a friend should put into your pocket a handful of gold: would you, when not a single piece of copper money was left you, account yourself much impoverished? or would you wonder at your friend, if he should say, ‘I know thy poverty; but thou art rich?’ Know then, that if, in proportion as you are injured by man, the blessings both of grace and glory are multiplied to you by God, you are not impoverished, but enriched. And therefore I say with confidence, “Fear nothing that can come unto you.” Let Satan do his worst: he is under restraint, as Laban and Esau were, when they meditated the destruction of Jacob^a. You well know how a miller acts, when a flood menaces the destruction of his mill. He suffers to come upon his mill only so much of the water as shall subserve his purposes, and he turns off the rest by another sluice. So will God act towards you: “The wrath of man shall praise him; and the remainder of wrath shall he restrain^b.”]

2. To have your minds altogether set on things above—

[To be “rich towards God^c,” “rich in faith^d,” and “rich in good works^e,” and to be daily “laying up treasure in heaven^f,” this is the proper object of a Christian. In this way you will obtain durable riches^g, and “a sure reward^h.” In this pursuit no human being shall ever fail. Mark, I pray you, the change of person in the promise which our Lord makes to the Church of Smyrna. In announcing their impending trials, he says to them, “YE shall have tribulation ten days:” but in the promise he makes, he speaks individually to

^a Gen. xxxi. 24, 29. and xxxii. 11, 12. and xxxiii. 1, 4.

^b Ps. lxxvi. 10.

^c Luke xii. 21.

^d Jam. ii. 5.

^e 1 Tim. vi. 18.

^f Luke xii. 33.

^g Prov. viii. 18.

^h Prov. xi. 18.

every soul among them: "Be THOU faithful unto death; and I will give THEE a crown of life." Every one may take to himself this encouraging declaration; and assure himself, that "no weapon formed against him shall ever prosperⁱ." Only let a man continue sowing to the Spirit, and he shall assuredly, in due season, "reap everlasting life^k."]

ⁱ Isai. liv. 17.

^k Gal. vi. 8.

MMCCCCLXXXVI.

EPISTLE TO SMYRNA.

Rev. ii. 11. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*

THIS passage, as an appendix to the epistle to the Church of Smyrna, appears at first sight to be an extraordinary anti-climax: for, in the very words preceding the text, it is said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Now, by "a crown of life" is meant all the glory and blessedness of heaven: it is a small thing, therefore, to a person who has obtained this promise, to tell him that he shall never be cast into hell. But the Scriptures often speak in a way of meiosis, as it is called; that is, under terms which, whilst they express little, convey the most stupendous truths. A remarkable instance of this kind I will mention. Jehovah, speaking to his ancient people, says, "Turn ye now every one from his evil way, and I will do you *no hurt*^a." What! is this all the encouragement that God gives to his people to turn unto him? May we not, at least, hope that he will do us *some good*? But far more was implied in this promise than met either the eye or the ear: and so it is in the promise which our Lord and Saviour gives in the words before us. In truth, if considered in their connexion with the foregoing context, and according to the true import of the words themselves, they will be found to be replete with the richest instruction, and with the most consoling encouragement.

^a Jer. xxv. 5, 6.

Let us, then, consider,

I. The promise here given to the victorious saint—

In order to see the promise in its true light, we must view it,

1. In connexion with the trials that awaited them—

[They had been told, that “Satan would cast some of them into prison; and that they should have tribulation ten days,” some of them suffering even unto death. Now these were painful tidings to flesh and blood: yet, when it was considered that they would be exempt from “the second death,” to which they might have been justly doomed, the prospect was greatly cheered: for the sufferings from which they were freed were penal, intolerable, everlasting; whereas those to which they were to be subjected were light and momentary, and as beneficial to themselves as they were honourable to God. To a soul contemplating its just desert, these thoughts must have been inconceivably precious. The very contrast between what man would inflict on earth, and what, but for his sovereign love and mercy, God would have inflicted on them in hell, must have made the deliverance appear so much the more wonderful, and the mercy vouchsafed to them so much the more endearing.]

2. In connexion with the sufferings that await the whole world besides—

[It is to the victor only that this promise is made. Who he is, we have before described: and all other persons, of what age or character soever they may be, must be condemned in the day of judgment, and “take their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.” Not only notorious sinners, who have rushed into all manner of iniquity, but the more decent moralists also, who have glided down the stream of this corrupt world, must perish. It is he only who stems the torrent of corruption which carries the whole world before it, and who urges with incessant labour his course heavenward; it is he alone, I say, that shall escape the wrath to come. Now, then, consider the great mass of mankind, with comparatively few exceptions, “cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;” consider them, I say, left to “weep and wail, and gnash their teeth,” in that place of torment, and “the smoke of their torment ascending up for ever and ever;” and then say, whether an exemption from this lot be a small matter. What would a soul that had been only a few hundred years in that place of torment think of such a deliverance, if it were possible for him now to be rescued from his misery? Methinks his transports would be such as a mere

mortal nature would be unable to sustain. Doubtless, then, the assurance here given to the Christian who overcomes his spiritual enemies must be an occasion of unutterable joy. And, inasmuch as this promise is given by the Holy Spirit to every soldier of Christ, and "all who have ears to hear are especially invited to attend to it," we cannot but commend it to the most attentive consideration of all who are here present.]

Let me now set before you—

II. The pledge given us for the performance of it—

There is somewhat very remarkable in the term which is translated "hurt." It does not import what we commonly mean by the word "hurt," which we should use in reference to any accidental injury we had sustained: it expresses an injury inflicted by a voluntary agent, who might well have forbore to inflict it^b. The sense of the passage then is, that the victorious saint shall not be "*injured*" by the second death; since the subjecting of him to it would be an injustice done to him. In fact,

1. It would be an injury done to the person suffering—

[Every saint of God has fled to Christ for refuge, in a full dependence on that promise, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." And in the strength of Christ he has "fought the good fight, and finished his course, and kept the faith, in an assured expectation that there is laid up for him, according to God's blessed word, a crown of righteousness, that fadeth not away." Now, suppose one such person subjected to the second death; would he not say, 'I am injured? Doubtless if I am to be dealt with according to my deserts, my mouth must be shut, whatever I may suffer: but I laid hold on the Gospel, and, according to the grace given to me, complied with the terms there prescribed: I relied solely on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation; and yet endeavoured, according to my ability, to fulfil his will: and I certainly do think that I have a claim to mercy; not indeed as deserving it at God's hands, but as washed in the blood of Christ, and clothed in his righteousness, and interested in all that he has done and suffered for me.' Yes, brethren, God himself authorizes this very idea. In the Scriptures it is said, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which

^b ἁδύκρητον.

ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister^c." Now, if God would account himself unjust if he neglected to recompense the good works of his people, how much more would he subject himself to that imputation if he were to cast one believing and obedient soul into hell! Then this is a pledge to the victorious Christian, that he "shall never be hurt of the second death." If a man who had fled to a city of refuge could not, consistently with the rights of justice and equity, be delivered up into the hands of the pursuer of blood; so neither can a believing and obedient soul be ever given up to the wrath of an avenging God.]

2. It would be an injury done to the Lord Jesus Christ himself—

[God the Father, when he entered into covenant with his Son, engaged, that "if he would make his soul an offering for sin, he should see a seed who should prolong their days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands^d." In dependence on this word, the Son of God became incarnate, and fulfilled the whole work assigned him, till he could say, "It is finished:" and he expected, of course, that, in the salvation of all who trusted in him, he should "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." But if he should behold one of his believing and obedient followers cast out, would he not have reason to complain, that the stipulations of the covenant were not fulfilled? When an offer was made to him, that, in the event of his undertaking to die for man, there should be a people given to him from amongst the tribes of Israel, he replied, "Then I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought and in vain:" and then the promise was enlarged to him, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth^e." How much more, then, might he complain, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought," if one of his faithful followers should be cast into hell! If one should be saved by a righteousness not derived from him, he would complain that he had died in vain^f: and how much more, if one whom he had washed in his blood, and sanctified by his grace, should perish! Here then is another pledge, that no victorious saint shall ever taste of the second death.]

3. It would be an injury done to the whole universe—

^c Heb. vi. 10.

^e Isai. xlix. 4—6.

^d Isai. liii. 10.

^f Gal. ii. 21.

[All are taught to look forward to the day of judgment, as “the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God^g,” that is, the day in which his perfect equity will be displayed. All, therefore, will expect that the rule of God’s procedure, as declared in his word, shall be adhered to. Of course, they will expect that those who have believed in Christ, and by the grace of Christ have subdued all their spiritual enemies, shall be saved. But what if they should see one of these consigned over to the second death, and left to take his portion with hypocrites and unbelievers? will they not say, ‘This greatly disappoints our expectations: we certainly hoped to see “a difference put between the righteous and the wicked, between those who served God and those who served him not.”’ Methinks, if one such instance were about to occur, one general sentiment would pervade the whole universe; and all the saints would prostrate themselves before Jehovah, as Abraham did in behalf of Sodom: saying, “Lord, wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right^h?” But we need not fear: there shall never be occasion for a remonstrance like this: and in this we have a further pledge, that no such injury shall ever be done to one believing and obedient soul.]

But, whilst I maintain this blessed truth,

1. Must I not take up a lamentation over those who are overcome in this warfare?

[I ask not what you have done in times past: I ask only, Have you engaged in warfare with all your spiritual enemies? and are you proceeding daily in a victorious career? If not, nothing awaits you but “the second death.” If you have not been so wicked as others, you will not have so heavy a condemnation as they; there will be fewer or heavier stripes appointed, according to the degree of your guilt: but hell will be terrible to those who sustain its slightest torments; and the duration of their torments will be for ever and ever. Look, I pray you, through the whole Scriptures, and see whether you can find one single word that promises an exemption from those torments to any soul that has not fought and overcome? *In every one of these epistles, you will find the promises limited to them that overcome.* Think then, I pray you, what an awful prospect is before you. Think how soon your day of grace may be closed, and your day of retribution commence.

^g Rom. ii. 5.

^h Gen. xviii. 23—25.

O dreadful thought! Perhaps before another day you may be, like the Rich Man in the Gospel, "lifting up your eyes in torments, and crying in vain for a drop of water to cool your tongue." Will ye then delay to enlist under the banners of Christ, or refuse to fight manfully under the Captain of your salvation? Will you be deterred from this by the menaces of men? Will you fear them who can only kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do? Will you not rather fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell? O! I say to you, "Fear HIM." If there were a storm of thunder and lightning, you would be filled with awe: and will you not tremble when God says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God?" and when he tells you, that "on the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cupⁱ?" O! what vivid flashes are here! what peals of thunder are here! Will ye tremble at that which can only separate your soul from your body, and not at that which will separate both body and soul from God for ever?—May God, in his mercy, awaken you ere it be too late! and may all of you make it henceforth the one object of your lives to "flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life!"

2. But to the victorious saint I must add a word of cordial congratulation—

[What may intervene between this and your final victory, I am not anxious to inquire. If you are fighting manfully under the banners of Christ, of this I am assured, that there shall "no temptation take you but what is common to men; and that your faithful God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make for you a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it^k." You need not then be anxious about the future. Your enemies are all in God's hands, and can do nothing which he will not overrule for your eternal good. And how blessed will be the termination of your warfare! What shouts of victory will you give, and what plaudits will you receive from the Captain of your salvation! You have nothing to fear from the second death: on the contrary, the very stroke that separates your soul from your body shall transmit your soul to the very bosom of your God; who, in due season, will raise your body also from the grave, to partake with your soul in all the glory and felicity of heaven. Yes; it is no fading and corruptible crown that you fight for, but an incorruptible one, which shall be accorded to you in the presence of the whole assembled universe. "Go

ⁱ Ps. ix. 17. and xi. 6.

^k 1 Cor. x. 13.

on then, from conquering to conquer," till all enemies be put under your feet: and the recollection of your conflicts shall serve only to enhance your joys to all eternity.]

MMCCCCLXXXVII.

EPISTLE TO PERGAMOS.

Rev. ii. 12, 13. *To the angel of the Church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works.*

IN a former epistle we have noticed, that the particular parts of our Saviour's character, with which the different epistles are introduced, are suited to the subject matter of each. In this address to the Church in Pergamos, our Lord has occasion both for reproof and menace: and therefore he describes himself as "holding the sharp sword with two edges." Now, according to the plan we have proposed, of investigating more minutely every distinct description of his person, I will now call your attention to,

I. The character with which our Lord is here invested—

The description here given of our blessed Lord frequently occurs in the Holy Scriptures; and, by comparing the different passages, we shall see that it holds him forth,

1. As a Sovereign—

[The word of a king, especially in despotic governments, goes forth with great authority: as Solomon has said, "Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou^a?" Now, by comparing our text with the larger description given of our Lord in the preceding chapter, from whence this smaller portion is taken, we shall see that this sword is *his word*, which proceedeth out of his mouth: "Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword^b." And "this word is indeed both quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword^c." It is a law to every child of man: the greatest kings and princes, no less than the poorest of mankind, are bound by it, and must obey it at their

^a Eccles. viii. 4.

^b Rev. i. 16.

^c Heb. iv. 12.

peril. In reference to it there must be no demur, no hesitation, no delay. To question its authority, or to doubt its wisdom, is treason. As, in heaven, "the angels do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word^d," so must it be with men on earth. There must be no resistance to him, even in thought: his word must be "mighty, to pull down every strong-hold, and to cast down every high imagination that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ^e."]]

2. As a Conqueror—

[In this view the holy Psalmist addresses him: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty: and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because (or in the cause) of truth and meekness and righteousness: and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee^f." Armed with this sword, he goes forth in the chariot of the everlasting Gospel, conquering and to conquer^g. Hear the description given of him by St. John, towards the close of this prophetic book: "I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon it was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse; which sword proceedeth out of his mouth^h." Yes, verily, with this sword shall "he get himself the victoryⁱ;" insomuch that "all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him^k," and "all the kingdoms of the earth become his" undivided empire^l.]

3. As a Judge—

["The word that he hath spoken, the same shall judge us in the last day^m." Amongst the books that shall be opened in that day, doubtless the sacred volume shall be one, and "according to what is written therein shall every soul of man be judgedⁿ." And so the Prophet Isaiah distinctly declares: He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the

^d Ps. ciii. 20.

^e 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

^f Ps. xlv. 3—5.

^g Rev. vi. 2. and xiv. 6.

^h Rev. xix. 11, 15, 16, 21.

ⁱ Ps. xcviii. 1.

^k Ps. lxxii. 11.

^l Rev. xi. 15.

^m John xii. 48.

ⁿ Rev. xx. 12.

earth: and *he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked*: and righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins^o." Then those who have resisted his authority as King, and withstood his power as a Conqueror, shall be constrained to submit themselves to him as their Judge: for "he will then appear in flames of fire, to take vengeance on them^p," and "will *consume them with the spirit of his mouth*, and destroy them with the brightness of his coming^q."]

Having marked the character of our Lord, I will endeavour to shew,

II. The deep interest we have in it—

It is obvious, that to the Church in Pergamos it was a consideration of vast importance; for the Lord himself said to them, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and *will fight against them with the sword of my mouth^r*." And is it of less importance to us? Methinks every Church under heaven, and every individual in the Church, should take occasion to inquire,

1. What effect has the ministry of the Gospel produced upon us?

[The Gospel, by whomsoever ministered, is "*the word of Christ*," which should dwell in us richly in all wisdom^s. And by all who hear it, it should be regarded, not as "the word of man, but really and truly as the word of God^t." Our Lord said to his Disciples, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth Him that sent me^u." On the contrary, "he who despiseth, despiseth not man, but God^x." Let me then ask, What reception has the Gospel found amongst you? If it have produced its proper effect amongst you, it has pierced your inmost souls: as it is written, "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart^y." O brethren, inquire, I pray you, whether it have thus penetrated the inmost recesses of your souls, so as to discover to you the hidden abominations of your hearts, and to make you cry mightily to God for the pardon of them! See the three thousand on the

^o Isai. xi. 4, 5.

^r ver. 16.

^u Matt. x. 40.

^p 2 Thess. i. 7—9.

^s Col. iii. 16.

^x 1 Thess. iv. 8.

^q 2 Thess. ii. 8.

^t 1 Thess. ii. 13.

^y Heb. iv. 12.

day of Pentecost, when smitten with this two-edged sword: what cries there were for mercy! "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Believe me, brethren, this is the very first effect which it will produce on you; and it must have already produced it, if you have not "received the grace of God in vain." "This is the fruit which it brings forth in all the world, wherever the grace of God is known in truth^z." But is there not, in too many instances, reason for God to complain, "I have hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth^a;" I have spoken to them the great things of my law; but they have counted them as a strange thing^b:" yea, "though I called them unto the Most High, none at all would exalt Him^c?" And shall this be accounted a light matter? It was not deemed so in the case of Zedekiah, of whom God complains, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, *speaking from the mouth of the Lord*^d." Beloved brethren, though no prophet, I also have "spoken to you from the mouth of the Lord;" and ye must answer unto God for every word that has been delivered to you in his name. Now, our blessed Lord says to you, "I know thy works." And he does know them, and record them in the book of his remembrance; and will bring them forth into judgment at the last day. Let not any of you imagine, that it is sufficient to yield an outward conformity, whether in sentiment or action, to the word of God. No, indeed; if you would really profit by it as you ought, you must be as sacrifices offered up to God upon his altar. The sacrifices, you know, were slain, and were so cut down as to expose to view their inward parts; and then were consumed on the altar, together with the meat-offerings and the drink-offerings that were presented on them. So must "you, to whom I minister the Gospel of God, be offered up as an acceptable sacrifice to God; being sanctified by the Holy God^e." Judge, I pray you, whether this has ever been truly wrought in you: for if the word be not thus "a savour of life to your souls, it will be unto you a savour of death," unto your heavier and more aggravated condemnation^f.]

2. What do we expect from it in the time to come?

[The word, my brethren, is "the sword of the Spirit^g;" and is raised, not to slay you, but to defeat and destroy your enemies. And it is a two-edged sword: every truth in it has a double aspect; speaking consolation to the obedient, as well

^z Col. i. 6.

^a Hos. vi. 5.

^b Hos. viii. 12.

^c Hos. xi. 7.

^d 2 Chron. xxxvi. 12.

^e Rom. xv. 16.

^f 2 Cor. ii. 16.

^g Eph. vi. 17.

as terror to the disobedient. By means of it, the Lord Jesus Christ carries on his work of grace in the souls of men; subduing all their enemies before them, and making them triumphant over all the powers of darkness. It was by the word that Christ himself repelled all the assaults of Satan in the wilderness^h; and by it he will “sanctify us throughout, in body, soul, and spiritⁱ.” We must therefore make use of it for this end; as it is said, “Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God^k.” Regard not then our blessed Lord as an object of terror; but as “the Captain of the Lord’s host,” armed for your deliverance^l. In the epistle before us, you will find a promise, as well as a threatening; and he will shew himself as mighty to fulfil the one, as to execute the other. Whilst, therefore, you fear him as an avenger, learn to confide in him as “able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him.”]

^h Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10.ⁱ John xvii. 17.^k 2 Cor. vii. 1.^l Josh. v. 14.

MMCCCCLXXXVIII.

EPISTLE TO PERGAMOS.

Rev. ii. 13—16. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

IN this epistle we have a mixture of commendation and reproof; and, corresponding with each, a mixture of menace and encouragement. The promise, as before, we shall leave for a distinct and separate discourse. At present, the two points for our consideration are,

I. The fidelity commended—

This was doubtless eminent and praiseworthy—

[Great were the snares with which the godly were encompassed in that city: on the one hand were licentious professors, who indulged in and vindicated the vilest excesses; and on the other hand were cruel persecutors, who were ready to drag to prison and to death all who should approve themselves faithful to their God. In truth, to such a degree did both these characters prevail, that Satan might well be said to have placed his throne there. Yet, in the midst of all these temptations, they would not either deny or dishonour their Divine Master. They had even seen Antipas, probably their pastor, sacrificed before their eyes; and knew not but that the same fate awaited them: yet would they not renounce their holy profession, or in any respect prove themselves dissemblers with God. This was a conduct highly pleasing to God; and the Lord Jesus Christ, who knew not their works only, but all the circumstances under which those works were performed, notes them in this epistle with special approbation.]

The same fidelity God expects from us—

[We, through mercy, live in less trying times, and are in no danger of suffering martyrdom for our adherence to Christ. But we have temptations enough to prove us, whether we will serve our God in sincerity and truth. If Satan's "*throne*" be not here, his *habitation* is: for, in truth, where is the place in which "he dwells" not? And to those who are exempt from greater evils, the smaller evils are great. If we be not in danger of imprisonment and death for the faith of Christ, there are lighter kinds of martyrdom to which we are exposed: hatred, and contempt, and persecution in a variety of ways, are the sure portion of those who will live godly in Christ Jesus: and these are not easy for flesh and blood to bear. But we must be willing to bear whatever cross may be laid upon us. We must even learn to "glory in tribulation," for the Lord's sake; and, like St. Paul, to account the most cruel death a matter of congratulation rather than condolence, if endured for righteousness' sake^a. Our "faithfulness must extend even unto death, if ever we would enjoy a crown of life."]

But our admiration of this Church is sadly lowered by,

II. The unfaithfulness reproved—

However they might palliate their conduct, they deserved reproof—

[There were amongst them those who held the doctrine of the Balaamites, and of the Nicolaitanes; both of whom

^a Rom. v. 3. Phil. ii. 17, 18.

considered it lawful to conform to idolatrous practices, and to indulge themselves in licentious habits. The Balaamites, it should seem, were *libertines*; (for Balaam knew that his practices were evil, and would bring the wrath of God on those who followed them^b;) and the Nicolaitanes probably were *Antinomians*, who persuaded themselves that idolatrous concessions, and lewd indulgences, would consist with an adherence to the Gospel. But such persons should not have been tolerated: they should have been checked in their career; and, if they had persisted in their sentiments and habits, they should have been excommunicated. If such “leaven were not purged out,” what could be expected, but that the whole Church would in time be penetrated with its malignant influence? They should have felt a zeal for the honour of their God: they should have exercised more holy love towards the different members of their Church, and have laboured to screen them from the temptations to which they were thus exposed. And of this supineness it became them to “repent.” They well knew how Eli had been punished for not expelling his own sons from the priesthood; and they should have exercised the authority that was vested in them by Christ himself^c: and, if they did not repent of this their wickedness, the Lord declared “he would come quickly, and fight against them with the sword of his mouth;” denouncing against them the judgments inflicted on the Israelites whom Balac had ensnared, of whom no less than twenty-four thousand fell in one day^d.]

Nor will it suffice for us to avoid sin ourselves, if we labour not also to prevent it in others—

[Persons will extol charity: but what has charity to do with the allowance of known and open sin? It is not charity to “call evil good, or good evil,” or to account sin to be no sin. Men will commend toleration also: but what has toleration to do with sin? *Persons* are to be tolerated; but not *sins*; and especially such sins, and more especially *in the Church of God*. St. Paul, in reference to heresies, as well as to open lusts, gives us the most explicit direction: “An heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself^e.” Doubtless we must be careful not to brand for heresy that which is not manifestly declared to be so in the word of God: and we must “receive in the spirit of meekness a brother that has been overtaken with a fault^f,” even as the incestuous

^b Numb. xxv. 1—3. and xxxi. 16.

^c Matt. xviii. 17.

^d Numb. xxv. 9.

^e Tit. iii. 10, 11. See also Rom. xvi. 17. 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14.

^f Gal. vi. 1.

and 2 John, ver. 10.

Corinthian was received after his penitence had been duly manifested to the satisfaction of the Church^g. But still our duty is clear: we must not only “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but must rather reprove them^h,” “looking diligently lest any root of bitterness spring up to trouble us, and thereby many be defiledⁱ. Nor are we to beguile ourselves with the specious name of candour. Candour has respect to *motives*, rather than to *acts*. In relation to open sin, we must act towards the body of Christ as we would towards a diseased member of our own body: we should suffer the amputation of one member, for the purpose of preserving the whole body from disease and death: and on the same principle must the Church inflict its censures, even to excommunication, on any member, which will not be healed, and cannot be retained without danger to the whole body. And if we, through indifference, will sanction such persons, by forbearing to put them out of the Church, we must expect that Christ will manifest his displeasure against us, and inflict on us the judgments threatened in his word. If we will thus “be partakers of other men’s sins, we must expect that God will also make us partakers of their plagues^k.”]

Two things, then, from this subject, I would earnestly

RECOMMEND:

1. Be firm—

[Decision of character well becomes every child of God. In matters of smaller moment we can scarcely be too complying: but when “either sins or errors solicit our indulgence, we cannot be too firm:” we must “hate even the garment spotted by the flesh^l.” Perhaps *in the Church* you have little power to testify your abhorrence of sin: but you have *in your families*, and *amongst your friends*: and whatever influence you have, you should exert it for God. We are expressly told, “Thou shalt in any wise reprove thy brother, and shalt not suffer sin upon him^m.” And if you be threatened by any, on account of your adherence to Christ, your path is plain: “Fear not those who can only kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear Himⁿ.” Tell me, I pray you, Does Antipas at this moment regret the sufferings he endured, and the sacrifice he made, even of life itself, for Christ’s sake? The very name here given him, “*My faithful martyr*,” is a pledge, that neither you, nor any who shall follow his steps, will ever regret their fidelity to such

^g 2 Cor. ii. 6—8.

^h Eph. v. 11.

ⁱ Heb. xii. 15.

^k Rev. xviii. 4.

^l Jude, ver. 23.

^m Lev. xix. 17.

ⁿ Luke xii. 4, 5.

a Master. "Save your life by unfaithfulness, and you will lose it: but lose it for your Lord's sake, and you shall save it for ever^o."]

2. Be consistent—

[You would surely have thought, that they who had braved death itself for Christ's sake could not have any thing to deplore. But here are the saints at Pergamos called to "repent" of their inconsistency, lest the heaviest judgments should be inflicted on them. Know, then, your whole heart and your whole soul must be under the regulation of a divine principle, and an entire consistency pervade your whole life. Religion must be carried into every thing. Religion must be in the soul what the soul is in the body. The souls sees in the eye, hears in the ear, speaks in the tongue, and actuates every member of the body: there is not a single motion which is not under its influence. Thus must every action of your life be regulated by a religious principle, and "every thought of your heart be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Then will you have nothing to fear from the two-edged sword of Christ; but be approved by him, in the day that he shall judge the world in righteousness and truth. "He knows your works;" and will be as glad to testify of them to your honour, as ever you can be to receive from him this token of his approbation.]

° Matt. x. 39.

MMCCCCLXXXIX.

EPISTLE TO PERGAMOS.

Rev. ii. 17. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*

IN every one of the epistles, it is the promise that comes last: for our blessed Lord would have a free and willing service, and not a service constrained by fear. Not but that threatenings are good in their place, because they produce a holy fear and caution: but it is by the promises chiefly that God accomplishes the work of his grace within us: and when we truly apprehend them, we shall invariably experience

their renewing efficacy; and be led by them to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God^a.”

In discoursing on the words before us, I shall endeavour to set before you,

I. The blessedness that awaits the victorious Christian—

The terms used in my text require much explanation. But, when duly considered, they will be found to intimate, that, in the eternal world, the victorious Christian will have accorded to him,

1. A more intimate connexion with the Lord Jesus—

[“To him will I give to eat of the hidden manna.” On manna the Israelites subsisted forty years in the Wilderness. But from the day that they ate corn in the land of Canaan, the supply of manna was withheld^b. There was, however, a vessel full of manna deposited with the ark, as a memorial of God’s goodness to them in the Wilderness^c. Any which the Israelites themselves attempted to hoard, even for a day, excepting for their use on the Sabbath-day, “bred worms, and stank;” but that which was laid up by God’s command, continued good for many hundreds of years, even to the time when all the vessels of the sanctuary were seized by Nebuchadnezzar, and carried into Babylon^d.

Now, it must be remembered, that the manna was a type of Christ^e. Even to the Jews it was “spiritual meat^f,” and all who had a spiritual discernment partook of Christ in it^g. To us, of course, there is no such food vouchsafed, so far as relates to the body: but in our souls we may feed upon it, even as they: for by faith our souls subsist on Christ, and live by him, even as their bodies did by a daily participation of the manna itself. Yet it is by faith only that we partake of this benefit. Not so when we reach the heavenly Canaan: the life of *faith* shall then cease, and the life of *sense* commence. The manna is laid up for us within the sanctuary, by the ark of God. There is the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and there shall we be admitted to the closest possible communion with him. Even *here* our souls lived by means of him; but *there* he will be,

^a 2 Cor. vii. 1.

^b Josh. v. 10—12.

^c Exod. xvi. 32—34.

^d Heb. ix. 4.

^e John vi. 31—35.

^f 1 Cor. x. 3.

^g John vi. 48—51.

in a far more intimate manner than he could be in this world, our very life^h. *Here* we had the foretaste of heavenly things: but there we shall have the full enjoymentⁱ.]

2. A more assured sense of his favour—

[“He will give us a white stone.”—Amongst the Greeks and Romans, when any man was tried for an offence against the State, those who sat in judgment upon him gave their verdict by means of a white stone, if they acquitted him; or by a black stone, if they condemned him: and, on some occasions, the vote they gave was confirmed by an inscription on the stone itself. Thus, when we arrive in the heavenly land, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Judge of quick and dead, will put into our hands a white stone, in token that we are fully and for ever justified in the sight of God. This blessing, also, was vouchsafed to us, in a measure, in this life: for there are many who are enabled to say, “We know that we have passed from death unto life^k,” yes, there are many who are privileged to possess a “full assurance of hope^l.” But still we are in the body: and no man can tell what a day may bring forth: nor does it become any man, who is “yet girt with his armour, to boast as one that putteth it off^m.” Here our faith must be mixed with fearⁿ: but in that day there shall be no occasion either for faith or fear; for faith shall be lost in sight, and hope be consummated in fruition. Yes, the very stone that declares our acquittal shall be put into our own hands; and be, to all eternity, an evidence of our acquittal, and a pledge that it shall never be reversed.]

3. A more exquisite enjoyment of his love—

[On the stone shall be a name written, which no man knoweth, “saving he that receiveth it.” God gave new names to many of his beloved people; to Abram, and Sarai; and Jacob, and Solomon: and a new name will God give to his victorious servants, “a name better than of sons and of daughters^o.” Even now are we called by that august title, “The Sons of God: and the world knows us not, because it knows not him^p.” Even now have we “a joy with which a stranger intermeddleth not^q,” and which language would fail us adequately to express^r. A Spirit of adoption, and the witness of the Spirit, who can comprehend, except the person that has received them^s? “This secret of the Lord is with those

^h Compare John vi. 37. and Col. iii. 3. with Rev. xxi. 23. and xxii. 1.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

^k 1 John iii. 14.

^l Heb. vi. 11.

^m 1 Kings xx. 11.

ⁿ Rom. xi. 20.

^o Isai. lvi. 4, 5.

^p 1 John iii. 1, 2.

^q Prov. xiv. 10.

^r 1 Pet. i. 8.

^s Rom. viii. 15, 16.

only who fear him: to whom, also, he shews his covenant^t, with all its unsearchable and inestimable benefits. But “the love of Christ, in all its heights and depths, infinitely surpasses all human knowledge^u :” nor, indeed, shall we be fully able to comprehend it, even in heaven. But *there*, on the white stone that shall be given us, will be engraven such characters as none but the possessor of that stone can comprehend. Conceive of a soul before whom all the glory of the Godhead is displayed, and to whom all the wonders of redeeming love are revealed, and into whose bosom all the fulness of God’s love is poured: and who shall estimate his joy? The sublimest conceptions that any finite being can form of such bliss would fall as far below it, as the glimmering of the glow-worm below the lustre of the noon-day sun. It must be felt, in order to be known.]

Does all this blessedness await the victorious soul?
Think, then, what are,

II. The measures which sound wisdom will prescribe,
in relation to it—

Surely you have anticipated all that I can have to say under this head. Yet it will be proper, at all events, that I add my testimony to what I am persuaded must be the dictates of all your minds. I say, then,

1. Enlist, without delay, under the banners of your Lord and Saviour—

[You are all, of necessity, called to be soldiers of Jesus Christ. In your very baptism you engaged to “fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to be Christ’s faithful soldiers and servants to your lives’ end. I call upon you, then, to execute the office which has thus devolved upon you. Mark, I pray you, the restrictive clause in my text: “To *him that overcometh* will I give” all this blessedness. It is not to him that never fights at all, nor to him that “fights only as one that beats the air:” no; it is to him who “wars a good warfare,” and overcomes all his enemies; to him, I say, and to him alone, will all these blessings be vouchsafed. Grieved I am to say, that, according to this view of God’s promises, there are but few that will ever taste the sweetness of them: but I entreat you, my brethren, to engage without delay in this warfare; and so to fight, that you may obtain the crown that fadeth not away — —]

^t Ps. xxv. 14.

^u Eph. iii. 18, 19.

2. Whatever conflicts you may have to sustain, never cease to fight, until you have obtained the victory—

[You must expect conflicts, and severe ones too, ere you are liberated from your engagements. A man who fights only against his fellow-man shall have much to endure before he gains the victory: and do you think that the world and the flesh and the devil will yield without much resistance? Look at the saints, that have gone before you, and you will find that “they all came out of great tribulation.” Your Saviour himself overcame not, but by the sacrifice of his own life. Be ye then ready to sacrifice your lives in this glorious contest^x: and as “He, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God^y,” so shall ye also, if only ye faint not, in due season “reign with him in glory for evermore^z” — — —]

^x Heb. ii. 14.

^y Heb. xii. 2.

^z Gal. vi. 9.

MMCCCCXC.

EPISTLE TO THYATIRA.

Rev. ii. 18, 19. *Unto the angel of the Church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works.*

THE similarity of method which is observed in all the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia Minor renders it difficult to diversify, in any great degree, our mode of treating the subjects contained in them. But, indeed, we need not be anxious about this matter; for the subjects themselves are greatly diversified; so that, though our mode of treating them may have an appearance of sameness, the sameness will be in appearance only, and not real. We have now to consider the character of our blessed Lord in a different point of view from any in which we have seen it before: and in our investigation of this we cannot be too particular. Let us then notice,

I. The description here given of our blessed Lord—

It is, as all the other descriptions are, suited to the subject of the epistle itself; in which is declared our Lord's perfect knowledge of the state of every individual in that Church, and his fixed determination to give to every one of them according to his works. In the words which have been read, are set forth,

1. His greatness—

[In the description contained in the first chapter, from whence all the detached parts of our Lord's character are taken, he is said to be "like unto the Son of Man^a:" but here he is called expressly "The Son of God." In the former description, his humanity is more particularly referred to; in the latter, his divinity. Not that these are always kept distinct in the inspired volume: for the name, "Son of Man," was used as equivalent with "the Son of God;" and was actually so understood by the Jews themselves, who took occasion, from his calling himself "the Son of Man," to accuse him of blasphemy, for representing himself as the Son of God^b, and of thereby professing himself to be "equal with God^c." St. Paul combines the two, and shews us clearly in what sense we are to understand the title here given to our blessed Lord: it declares him to be God, equal with the Father: for "being from all eternity in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross^d." By this name, "The Son of God," his advent had been predicted^e: by this name he had been repeatedly saluted by a voice from heaven^f: by this name had he been acknowledged by his most favoured servants^g: and, even in the very article of death, by the man who superintended his execution^h. And, when his Gospel was preached by his Apostles, this acknowledgment of his divinity was demanded of all who embraced his religion, and was deemed by them a satisfactory proof of a man's conversion to Godⁱ. Let us then understand, by the title here given him, that, though "he was a child born, and a son given, he was indeed the Mighty God^k," even "God over all, blessed for evermore^l."]

^a Rev. i. 13.

^b Matt. xxvi. 63—65.

^c John v. 17, 18. and x. 33.

^d Phil. ii. 6—8.

^e Ps. ii. 7.

^f Matt. iii. 17. and xvii. 5.

^g John i. 49.

^h Matt. xxvii. 54.

ⁱ John viii. 37, 38.

^k Isai. ix. 6.

^l Rom. ix. 5.

2. His penetration—

["He has eyes like unto a flame of fire." The power of fire, to penetrate the hardest substances, and to identify itself, as it were, with metals, so that not an atom of brass or iron, when subjected to its action, shall escape its all-pervading power, is well-known. The power of flame also, when employed in scientific experiments, is well known, insomuch that it will reduce even diamonds to a cinder. This image, therefore, well illustrates the all-penetrating, all-discerning eye of Jesus, whom not a thought that comes into our hearts^m, nor "an imagination of a thought," can ever escapeⁿ. Very striking is the representation which St. Paul gives us of this, in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "There is not any creature which is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do^o." The sacrifices, previously to their being offered upon the altar, were not only examined outwardly, but were flayed, and then cut down the back-bone, so that all the inwards might be exposed to view, and every part be inspected with the greatest care, to see that they were perfectly free from blemish of any kind: and such is the view which the Lord Jesus Christ has of every soul. "The darkness is no darkness with him; but the night is as clear as the day." We may conceal matters from our fellow-creatures: yea, and much may be hid also from ourselves: but from him is nothing hidden, either as to its existence, or to its real character: the sun itself, at noon-day, is not more clearly visible to us, than are the inmost recesses of our souls to him.]

3. His power—

["His feet are like fine brass." By this I understand his unchanging firmness, in every thing that he has decreed; and his irresistible power to execute his designs, whether it be for the salvation of his people, or for the destruction of his enemies. All his determinations, as revealed in his word, shall assuredly be carried into effect. The whole universe shall never move him from his purpose. Let a believer trust in him; and all the powers of darkness "shall never be able to pluck him out of his hands." Let an enemy persist in his rebellion against him, he shall soon find what "a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God." In the first chapter it is said, "His feet are like unto fine brass, *as if they burned in a furnace*^p:" yes, they will not only tread down his enemies, but utterly consume all who dare to contend with him. He tells us, in this epistle, that he will give to his

^m Ezek. xi. 5.^o Heb. iv. 13. See the Greek.ⁿ Gen. vi. 5.^p Rev. i. 14, 15.

victorious people “power over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron, and to break them in pieces as a potter’s vessel^a.” and he shews us, in the description here given of him, that he is fully able to confer on them the promised benefit, and to make every one of them as victorious as he himself has been.]

But the character of our Lord is not a subject for speculation only : no ; in every particular we should consider,

II. The improvement to be made of it—

1. Let us admire his condescension—

[This epistle, though addressed to Thyatira, is designed for every Church under heaven, and for every individual in the Church, so far as the particular expressions of it are applicable to him. And amazing is that condescension, which has induced Almighty God so to remember us, and so to consult our welfare ! If the Psalmist says, “ Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him ; or the son of man, that thou visitest him^r ? ” how justly may we exclaim, ‘ Lord, what are we, that thou shouldest dictate to thy servant John a letter unto *us*, a letter for *our* instruction, a letter for *our* benefit ? ’ If but an earthly monarch had honoured us in this way, we should have accounted it a marvellous condescension : but, O ! what is it to be so honoured and so regarded by the God of heaven and earth ! How should we value these epistles ! how should we study them ! how should we treasure up in our hearts the inestimable truths contained in them ! Remember, I pray you, brethren, that it is “ the Son of God ” himself who has sent you this epistle ; and prepare to receive every suggestion contained in it, as bearing the impress of his authority, and an expression of his love : and treasure up every word of it, not in your cabinet, as a curiosity to be admired, but in your inmost souls, as a record to be obeyed.]

2. Let us maintain integrity before him—

[He tells us, that “ he requireth truth in our inward parts^s : ” and we may be well assured that the smallest measure of “ partiality or hypocrisy ” will be discovered by him^t. In this epistle he tells us, that “ all the Churches shall know that it is He who searcheth the reins and trieth the hearts^u. ” At the last day, especially, “ he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts^x. ” Yes, “ every secret thing shall he bring forth into judgment, whether it be good or evil^y. ” See, then, that there

^a ver. 26, 27.

^r Ps. viii. 4.

^s Ps. li. 6.

^t Jam. iii. 17.

^u ver. 23.

^x 1 Cor. iv. 5.

^y Rom. ii. 16. Eccles. xii. 14.

be in you no undue bias, no secret lust: but let him be able to testify of you, that you are “Israelites indeed, and without guile^z.” And if you are not conscious of any allowed evil, be not too confident that you are really blameless in his sight; but say with the holy Apostle, “I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord^a.”]

3. Let us confide in him for all needful support—

[Whom did he ever deliver up into the hands of their enemies? Are we not told, that “his name is a strong tower; and that the righteous runneth to it, and is safe?” The same idea that is contained in our text, is conveyed also in those words, “He is a wall of fire round about us, and the glory in the midst of us^b.” “A wall of fire” will not only protect those who are enclosed by it, but will destroy also their assailants. So will Christ do, with his feet like fine brass just taken out of the furnace. Fear not, then, the assaults either of men or devils; but confide in him, expecting assuredly, that “his strength shall be perfected in your weakness^c.” “If he have begun the good work in you, you may be confident that he will carry it on, and perfect it to the end^d.” “To whomsoever he has been the Author of their faith, he will also be the Finisher^e.” “Of those whom the Father has given him, he never did, nor ever will, lose so much as one^f.”]

^z John i. 47.

^a 1 Cor. iv. 3.

^b Zech. ii. 5.

^c 2 Cor. xii. 9.

^d Phil. i. 6.

^e Heb. xii. 2.

^f John xvii. 12.

MMCCCCXCI.

EPISTLE TO THYATIRA.

Rev. ii. 19—23. *I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the Churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.*

IN reading these different epistles, we cannot but tremble, lest, after all our endeavours to serve the Lord, we come short at last, and, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, we be found wanting. Truly, to be Christians indeed, is no easy task. But "the grace of Christ is sufficient for us;" and will prove itself sufficient, if only we seek it in spirit and in truth. In dependence on that grace, let us proceed to consider,

I. The characteristic excellence of the Church at Thyatira—

Great were the virtues for which they were commended—

[Our blessed Lord, who with infallible certainty "knew all their works," said to them, "I know thy charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience." Under these expressions, I conceive, were contained their principal duties both to God and man. Their "love" both to God and man abounded: and it was operative in every kind of "service" both to the one and to the other, according as opportunity was afforded for the exercise of love. It sprang also from the only true source of all acceptable obedience; that is, from faith in God, as their reconciled God and Saviour. It continued also to operate under all circumstances, however difficult or distressing. No fires of persecution could quench it; no sufferings could abate its ardour: they took up their cross with cheerfulness, and bare it with constancy, and brought forth fruit with "patience;" so that "patience," as well as love, "had in them its perfect work." What St. Paul said, in reference to the Thessalonian Church, St. John might well have applied to those at Thyatira: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering, without ceasing, your works of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ^a."]

But their chief excellence was, that their piety had been progressive—

[Our blessed Lord yet further testified respecting them, that their last works had been more than their first. They had not "left their first love," as those of the Church at Ephesus had done; but had "grown in grace," and had made a proficiency in every part of their duty. Now, to this progress in the divine life God has especial regard; insomuch

^a 1 Thess. i. 2, 3.

that, however righteous we may have been in times past, "our righteousness, if we turn away from it, shall no more be remembered; but for the sin that we have committed we shall die^b." "It is the character of the truly righteous man, that "he holds on his way, and his hands wax stronger and stronger^c." His path must be like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day^a." "The man who, after having put his hand to the plough, looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of God^e." To be "weary in well-doing," however arduous our labour may be, will deprive us of that recompence^f, which a persevering "continuance in it would have assured^g." Whatever we may have attained, we must "abound more and more^h;" our "love" must be more fervent, our "service" more abundant, our "faith" more steadfast, our "patience" more invincible, and our "works" altogether more consonant with our obligations, and more consistent with our professions. Like St. Paul, we should "forget what is behind, and reach forward to what is before; and press on, with ever-increasing ardour, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesusⁱ." When this is our state, we may assuredly expect the approbation of our God^k.]

Nevertheless, this was not the character of all in that Church: on which account our Lord proceeded to state,

II. The guilt and danger in which some of their members were involved—

A most fatal imposture was tolerated among them—

[Who it was that is here designated by the name of "Jezebel," or whether there were more than one, we cannot say: it is not improbable that several were engaged in seducing others: at all events, whether one or many, they were justly called Jezebel, because of their resemblance to that abandoned woman. She, though married to Ahab, retained her zeal for idolatry, and used every device to support and propagate it. Thus, at Thyatira, some who professed themselves Christians were idolaters in heart, and exerted themselves, in the most subtle methods, to disseminate their principles; yea, they even pretended to a divine commission, to draw others to a compliance with their idolatrous practices, which in Scripture language is "fornication" and "adultery." These

^b Ezek. xxxiii. 12, 13, 18.

^c Job xvii. 9.

^d Prov. iv. 18.

^e Luke ix. 62.

^f Gal. vi. 9.

^g Rom. ii. 7.

^h 1 Thess. iv. 1.

ⁱ Phil. iii. 13, 14.

^k 2 Thess. i. 3, 4.

persons "had space given them to repent; but they repented not:" and their obstinacy in sin greatly heightened both their own guilt and the guilt of those also who tolerated them in the Church. It is true, the members of the Church were not invested with any civil authority, and therefore could not punish the offenders with the sword: but they should have united in condemning the sentiments and conduct of those impostors, and, by a sentence of excommunication, have purged out this leaven from among them.]

Against those who had thus sanctioned the imposture, our Lord denounced the heaviest judgments—

[In these threatenings there is a striking reference to what had been accomplished towards Jezebel and her family. She had shed the blood of Naboth in Jezreel; and both her husband's blood and her son's blood were licked by dogs, in the very same place where dogs had before licked the blood of Naboth; yea, she herself also was devoured by dogs, almost on the same spot¹: and soon afterwards, *the whole family* of Ahab, even seventy sons, were put to death. Thus God threatened, that, for their spiritual fornication, "he would cast them into a bed, and those who committed adultery with them, into great tribulation, and that he would kill the teachers and *their followers* with death." He further declared, that, as in the case of Jezebel, *their sin should be so visibly marked in their punishment*, as to manifest to the whole Church, that the Saviour, whom they thus despised, was indeed the omniscient Jehovah^m, and the righteous Judge of all. He did indeed still offer to pardon them on their repentance: but if that offer, like those which had preceded it, should be slighted, his vengeance would come upon them to the uttermost.

And is there not, in every age, a remarkable correspondence between the judgments inflicted on false teachers and the sins which they commit? The contemners of vital godliness, whether of the Infidel or Antinomian class, are filled with pride and presumption: and God "gives them over to delusion, till they believe their own lie," and "perish in their own corruptions." O that both the deceivers and deceived might "repent them of their deeds!" and that all who have hitherto maintained their steadfastness might so zealously oppose the incursions of sin and error, as to "preserve" themselves, and all with whom they are connected, "blameless unto the day of Christ!" If, however, this warning be slighted, let it be

¹ 1 Kings xxi. 9, 10, 19, 23. xxii. 38. and 2 Kings ix. 25, 26, 36, 37.

^m Mark the force of the words, "I am He that searcheth;" *i. e.* that I possess that which is the prerogative of God alone.

remembered, that “the end of all shall be according to their works.”]

In CONCLUSION, I would say to every one amongst you—

1. Imitate their virtues—

[It is to little purpose to call yourselves Christians, if ye be not “Christians indeed, and without guile.” If the Lord were to testify respecting the great mass of the Christian world, he must say, ‘I know thy works to be the very reverse of all that distinguished the Thyatiran Church: thou hast no love to me; nor dost thou render me the services I require: nor hast thou any of that faith which worketh by love; nor dost thou bear any cross for righteousness’ sake. Thy works, from year to year, are still the same, except so far as age or outward circumstances may cause them to vary: thou art still the same unhumiliated, unbelieving, and disobedient sinner as ever thou wast.’ But let it not be so with you, my brethren: let God’s testimony rather be, ‘I know *thy* works, and *thine*, and *thine*, that they are altogether such as I approve; and that thou art advancing so manifestly in holiness, that “thy profiting appears unto all”’ — — —]

2. Tremble, lest thou be exposed to their judgments—

[You are continually under the eye of the heart-searching God, who sees every defect in your obedience, and will judge you at the last day according to your works. He requires of you, not a personal obedience only, but a constant exertion, according to your power, to promote the same in others. You are responsible to God for your influence; whether it extend to the Church at large, or be limited to the narrower sphere of your more immediate neighbours. You should feel a holy zeal for God; and should labour, according to your ability, to uphold his honour in the world. God, I say, expects this at your hands; and he will call you to an account for the improvement of every talent committed to your charge. May you all approve yourselves faithful to him, that when he shall come to judgment, you may receive that plaudit at his hands, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!”]

MMCCCCXCII.

THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA.

Rev. ii. 24, 25. *But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.*

IN these words we have an injunction addressed to the more consistent members of the Church at Thyatira. If there were some who had been drawn aside from the path of duty by the seductions of Satan, the great mass of that Church had held fast their integrity, and approved themselves faithful to their God. They had been assaulted, and were yet in danger of being still assaulted, by persons professing a deeper insight into divine truth than others: (in fact, all innovators, whether infidels or heretics, arrogate to themselves superior wisdom, and propose their sentiments under the idea of “depths,” which the poor simple-minded believers have not been able to fathom:) but “the depths” of which these deceivers spake, were “depths of Satan” rather than of God; and the faithful members of that Church rejected with abhorrence the impious sentiments contained in them: and for this they were commended of their God; who says, “I will put upon you none other burden but this;” “What ye have already, hold fast till I come^a,” that is, ‘Ye have been faithful in your adherence to me; and all that I require of you is, that you steadfastly persevere in the same course, till I come, at the last day, to attest, and to recompense, your fidelity.

Now, the same injunction is given to the Church in all ages: so that, taking it to ourselves, we may notice,

I. The duty inculcated—

^a Compare Acts xv. 28. The “burden” relates to that which follows: and so we understand it here.

It is here taken for granted, that we have made *some* progress in the divine life. Now, whatever it be that we have attained, we should "hold it fast." We should "hold fast,"

1. The truth itself—

[Many at this day, as well as in the apostolic age, exert all their ingenuity to invalidate and subvert the truth. Some will call in question even the divine authority of the Bible: others will deny the divinity of our blessed Lord, and the atonement which he has made for sin. Others again, like the Pharisees of old, will blend the law with the Gospel, as a joint ground of hope before God: whilst others, under an idea of magnifying the grace of God, will deny that the law is to be regarded by us as a rule of life. But we must be on our guard against error of every kind, and "hold fast the form of sound words" which the holy Apostles have delivered unto us^b. The Gospel in itself is extremely simple: 'We are fallen creatures, deserving of God's wrath and indignation. The Lord Jesus Christ has come to restore us to the favour and the image of God; to his favour, by making satisfaction for our sins; and to his image, by the influences of his Holy Spirit upon our souls.' This, I say, is the sum and substance of the Gospel: and though, doubtless, there are depths in it which no finite intelligence can fathom, yet is it so plain, that a very child may comprehend it. Hold this fast then; and, "for the knowledge of it, let all other things be accounted by you as dung and dross."]

2 The open profession of it—

[We may retain in our minds a regard for the truth, without exciting any uneasy feelings in those who are opposed to it. But, if we profess it openly, and stand forth as avowed servants of Christ, we shall be sure to make ourselves, even as Christ himself was, "a butt of contradiction^c." No means will be left untried to repress our ardour: menaces, entreaties, promises, expostulations, will all be used in their turn, to withdraw us from our purpose of confessing Christ before men, and of becoming his stated followers. But nothing should induce us to deny Christ, or to put our light under a bushel. Not even life itself should be dear to us, in comparison of the approbation of God and of our own conscience. We must "follow Christ without the camp, bearing his reproach," and "rejoicing that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake." In a word, we must be steadfast in the faith, and "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering^d."]

^b 2 Tim. i. 13.

^c Luke ii. 34. the Greek.

^d Heb. x. 23.

3. The sweet experience of it in the soul—

[This is soon lost, and Satan will exert himself in all possible ways to rob us of it. Any sin indulged in the heart will “grieve the Spirit” of God, and provoke our God to “hide his face from us.” Nor is it open sin only that will bring darkness upon the soul: habitual negligence will soon produce the very same effects. If we cultivate not our garden with unwearied assiduity, I need not say that weeds will grow up, and choke the seed that has been sown in it. If we would enjoy the light of God’s countenance, we must “walk with God,” as Enoch did; and “keep ourselves in the love of God,” “holding fast our confidence, and the rejoicing of our hope firm unto the end.”]

This being our acknowledged duty, let me call your attention to,

II. The consideration with which it is enforced—

Much is spoken in Scripture respecting the future advent of our Lord. He will come at the last day, to judge the world in righteousness: and the prospect of that event may well operate on our minds, to keep us steadfast in every part of our duty. For when that shall take place,

1. All opportunity of recovering the ground we have lost will be at an end—

[With respect to ourselves, it matters not whether we be alive at the coming of our Lord or not; for to every individual of mankind, the day of his death will be, in fact, the day of judgment: “there will be no repentance to him in the grave:” on the contrary, “as the tree falls, so it will lie:” “he that is holy, will be holy still; and he that is filthy, will be filthy still.” We may be slumbering, like the foolish virgins; and dreaming of some future period, when we will arise to trim our lamps: but “when the Bridegroom comes, they only who are watching will enter in with him to the wedding; and the door will then be shut;” and all will be excluded for ever who waited not aright for the coming of their Lord. You all know how vain were the efforts of the foolish virgins to procure oil, when once the proper period for obtaining it was past: and so shall we find it, in the day that our Lord shall come, if we be unprepared to meet him. Let this thought stimulate us to watchfulness and zeal, that, “at whatever hour our Lord shall come, we may be found ready.”]

* Heb. iii. 6.

2. Our real state, whatever it may be, will be made known—

[We may appear, both to ourselves and others, to be in a far more favourable state than we really are. In truth, those very delusions which men embrace are often esteemed by them as evidences of superior piety. But the various books which will then be opened—the book of Scripture, the book of conscience, the book of God's remembrance, and the book of life, will all bear testimony to our real state, and make us to appear in our true colours. If we have declined from the ways of God, whatever those declensions were, or from whatever cause they arose, they will all be noted, and “the Lord's judgment respecting us be in all things according to truth.” Should we not, then, be on our guard against every device, whether of men or devils, to draw us from our God? Yes, verily, we should “prove all things” with incessant care; and “hold fast,” with invincible firmness, “the thing which is good^f.”]

3. Our final sentence will then be irreversibly declared—

[The sheep and the goats will then be separated, each for their proper fold. The hypocrite will then have his portion assigned him, and the apostate his, according to the degree in which they have erred from the faith, and to the light against which they have sinned. Hence St. John not only exhorts the steadfast to “look to themselves, that they lose not the things that they have wrought, but that they receive a full reward^g,” but further gives to the wavering this solemn warning, “Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown^h.”]

Methinks this subject speaks powerfully,

1. To those in early life—

[Who, that reflects on the temptations to which the young are exposed, must not tremble for their state? The world with all its snares, the flesh with all its lusts, the devil with all his devices; who is able to withstand them all? Truly, if it were not that we have an Almighty Friend to uphold us, not one would ever endure to the end. O, cry mightily to God to “bear you up in his arms,” and to “preserve you blameless unto his heavenly kingdom!”]

2. To the more advanced Christian—

[Even you have need to fear, lest, after all you have experienced, like David and like Solomon, you fall. But, methinks, it is no little comfort to you to reflect, that “the coming

^f 1 Thess. v. 21.

^g 2 John, ver. 8.

^h Rev. iii. 11.

of your Lord draweth nigh." Look for him then daily, having your loins girt and your lamp trimmed: so shall you behold his face with joy; and "your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."]

MMCCCCXCIIL.

EPISTLE TO THYATIRA.

Rev. ii. 26—29. *He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

NOW we come to the encouragement which our Lord gives his faithful people to maintain their integrity. To the steadfast and victorious he promises "the glory and honour and immortality which they seek for." The terms indeed, in which these promises are conveyed, are not easy to be understood; but, when understood, they are very cheering to the soul: I will, therefore,

I. Explain the promises here given—

The saints at Thyatira had been, as in truth they are in all times and places, subjected to persecution from their enemies: and here our Lord promises them,

1. Honour, when all others shall be abased—

[Now the enemies of Christ reign; and "his people are trodden under foot^a:" but, ere long, the state of things shall be reversed. Even in this world the time is coming when "the saints shall possess the kingdom^b," and when those who seek to oppress them shall be destroyed with a terrible destruction. Till that period shall arrive, the saints are to bear and suffer all things: but, at the time of the Millennium, when there will be a formidable and almost universal combination against them, God has ordained, that they shall be his instruments to punish his enemies, just as they were when he sent them to extirpate the seven nations of Canaan^c. Foreign as

^a Jer. xii. 10.

^b Dan. vii. 22.

^c Rev. xix. 11—21.

war and bloodshed are to the wishes and feelings of a Christian mind, there will be no more reluctance in the saints then to execute the commission given them, than there was in the angel to slay in one night all the Egyptian first-born, or one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrian army. Of that period the Psalmist speaks: "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds: let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishment upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written. This *honour* have all his saints^d."

But this honour will they possess in a far higher degree in the day of judgment. For then will the Lord Jesus Christ "put all enemies under his feet^e," and execute vengeance on them; as God has said: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel^f." In the whole of that transaction the saints will bear their part. They will sit with Christ, as his assessors in judgment; and will concur with him in all that he shall do; saying, "True and righteous are his judgments;" and to every one of them *we* say, "Amen, Amen, Hallelujah, Amen^g." This is so unquestionable a truth, that St. Paul takes for granted that every saint must be well acquainted with it: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? yea, know ye not that we shall judge even angels^h?" Yes, brethren, then will be fulfilled that saying of the Psalmist, "Man, being in honour, abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; and *the upright shall have dominion over them in the morningⁱ*."]

2. Glory, when all others shall be put to shame—

[Now, the ungodly shine forth with splendour; whilst the godly, if not immured in prisons, are put altogether in the back-ground, in a state of darkness and obscurity. But the time is coming when God will "give to his saints the morning star." The morning star rises with peculiar brilliancy a little before the sun, when all the other stars of heaven fade away, and vanish from our sight. And so will it be with the saints in the day of judgment. When the fashion of this world shall have passed away as a passing scene or vision, then shall the saints "shine forth as the stars of the firmament for ever and ever^k:" then shall be seen upon them the bright radiance of the Saviour's beams; and they shall, as it were, be his harbingers to proclaim his advent: yes, thus shall "they be

^d Ps. cxlix. 5—9.

^e 1 Cor. xv. 25.

^f Ps. ii. 9.

^g Rev. xix. 1—4.

^h 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.

ⁱ Ps. xlix. 12, 14.

^k Dan. xii. 3.

exalted in glory¹;" whilst "the wicked," who once treated them with scorn and contempt, shall themselves "be silent in darkness^m."

Having explained the promises, I will now,

II. Commend them to your most attentive consideration—

Let your minds, my brethren, rise to the occasion. See, in these promises,

1. What encouragement they afford to the followers of Christ—

[The Lord's people have, in this world, their cross to bear, and are destined to follow their Divine Master through much tribulation: but they are assured, that, "if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with himⁿ," and that not the meanest of their services shall be unrewarded^o." And here I would particularly call your attention to the parallel which our Lord himself has drawn in our text: "To him will I give . . . even as I have received of my Father." Yes, every thing which God the Father has given to his Son, as the reward of his services, he will give to us, so far as we are capable of receiving and enjoying it. Has the Father given to him a throne and a kingdom? such will Christ confer on us also. He himself says, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me^p:" and again; "To him that overcometh, will I grant to set with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father upon his throne^q." There is no part of "the glory which his Father has given him, which he will not, according to our capacity, give to us^r." And shall not the prospect of it all operate on us, as it wrought on Christ himself, when, for the "joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame, till he sat down at last at the right hand of the throne of God^s?" I say, then, "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds^t — — —]

2. What a recompence they hold forth for our poor services—

[Methinks, if nothing more had been said, than that his faithful people should have all their guilt cancelled, and be delivered from the judgments which they have so richly

¹ Ps. cxii. 8—10.

^m 1 Sam. ii. 8, 9.

ⁿ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

^o Matt. x. 42.

^p Luke xxii. 29.

^q Rev. iii. 21.

^r John xvii. 22.

^s Heb. xii. 2.

^t Heb. xii. 3.

merited, it would have been an ample recompence for all that we could either do or suffer for him in this life. Suppose that such a proposal were now made to one of the fallen angels, or to the rich man that is now lifting up his eyes in hell torments; would he not gladly embrace the offer, and account all his future labours well repaid, even though nothing but annihilation awaited him when he had performed his task? Let us look at our works, and see what they are: tell me if there be one for which you do not blush, on account of its defects? and whether, if they had been a thousand times more perfect, you would not still have accounted yourselves “unprofitable servants?” But it is not in this way that God magnifies his grace. No: he giveth not in such scanty measure to his beloved children; nor does he so estimate their poor imperfect services. He accounts not all the glory and felicity of heaven too great for them. He makes them his very heirs, “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; that, having suffered with him, they may also be glorified together^x.” In truth, at the last day the saints shall all resemble Christ. It is said of HIM, that “HE shall smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron; and tread the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God^y.” HE, too, says of himself, “I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star^z.” And *this is the honour*, and *this is the glory*, which he has promised to confer on us. As Joshua commanded the captains of his army to come and put their feet upon the necks of the vanquished kings^a, so will the Great Captain of our salvation make those who have fought under his banners to participate the glory and felicity of his triumphs. Tell me, then, whether it does not become us to “keep his works” with all diligence; accounting “no commandment grievous;” nor hesitating, if called to it, to lay down our life for his sake? Let us keep them then, my brethren, yea, and keep them *all*, and “even to the end.” Let us “never be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not^b.” I may further add, that “every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour^c.” No doubt there will be a difference in the rewards, as well as the punishments, of men in a future life: for “one star will differ from another star in glory^d.” And this may well stimulate us to the utmost possible exertion in the service of our God. But to the least and meanest of the saints shall the recompence be inconceivably great: for the very lowest in glory “shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, for ever and ever^e.”]

^u Luke xvii. 10.^x Rom. viii. 17.^y Rev. xix. 15.^z Rev. xxii. 16.^a Josh. x. 24.^b Gal. vi. 9.^c 1 Cor. iii. 8.^d 1 Cor. xv. 41.^e Matt. xiii. 43.

MMCCCCXCIV.

EPISTLE TO SARDIS.

Rev. iii. 1. *And unto the angel of the Church in Sardis write ; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars ; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*

IF we thought, as some do, that the epistles to the different Churches in Asia were descriptive of the state of the Church, in successive periods of time, to the end of the world, we should be ready to fix on this epistle, above all others, as characterizing the present time. There is much profession of religion in the world, and somewhat of the reality ; but very many, who “ have the form of godliness, are either wholly destitute of its power,” or so inanimate as to excite suspicions that they are “ dead.” Without intending to say that any such parallel was designed of God (for I conceive that all the epistles were merely descriptive of the several Churches at the time they were written), I yet feel no doubt, but that, so far as the circumstances of any particular Church at this day accord with those of any Asiatic Church, what is spoken to that Asiatic Church may well be applied to us at this time. I therefore avail myself of this to point out to you,

I. The reproof given to the Church of Sardis—

Our blessed Lord, in this, as in all the other epistles, assumes to himself such titles and attributes as are peculiarly suited to the subject-matter of the epistle itself. He was about to declare the real state of the Church at Sardis to be very different from that which was generally supposed : we therefore here find,

1. His qualifications for exercising judgment—

[He has in himself all the fulness of the Spirit. This is intimated in that expression, “ He hath the seven Spirits of God.” The number, *seven*, denotes both variety and perfection : and he has, both for his own personal endowment and

for the benefit of his people, the Holy Spirit in all his diversified powers and operations. As Messiah, it was foretold of him, that "he should be anointed with the oil of joy and gladness above his fellows^a;" that is, above all, whether in earth or heaven, who should partake of this divine unction. It was said, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord^b." So endowed, he was able to discern every motion of men's hearts: not the slightest "imagination of a thought" could escape his notice: "every spirit could be weighed by him" in a perfect balance; and his "judgment could not but be according to truth." Hence it is expressly said of him, that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do^c." At the same time, "he holdeth the seven stars in his hand;" and observes whether they move with perfect regularity in their respective orbits, and reflect with unclouded splendour, for the benefit of the world, the light which they derive from him. He has formed them for his own glory; and he expects that they exist and move for no other end.

But, from the closest inspection of them, he gives this as,]

2. His testimony respecting that degenerate Church—

[“Thou hast a name that thou livest, and (but) art dead.” The Church of Sardis was held in repute by the other neighbouring Churches to which the different epistles were written: but they were really in a very degenerate state; many of them being yet altogether “dead in trespasses and sins;” and those who had a spark of life within them, being so cold, as to be to all appearance “dead.” What were the precise points in which they failed, we are not informed. It does not appear that there was any flagrant violation of God’s law among them, or any toleration of principles that were fundamentally erroneous; for then they would have been condemned on these accounts, as the other Churches had been: but, while they were externally blameless, he “found,” and testified, that their inward state was lamentably defective. Of this he complained; and,]

From his complaint, I will take occasion to shew,

II. How far it is applicable to the Christian Church at this day—

^a Ps. xlv. 7.

^b Isai. xi. 2, 3.

^c Heb. iv. 13.

There is doubtless a great profession of religion at the present day—

[Religion, in some respects, has of late become, I had almost said, the fashion of the day. The leading doctrines of Christianity, such as our fall in Adam and our recovery by Christ, are so generally acknowledged now, that, if they were kept out of sight in the degree in which they were withheld from public notice through the seventeenth and the greater part of the eighteenth century, there would be a general complaint against those ministers who so treacherously withheld from men the bread of life. Mere morality would not satisfy men now, as it did through that unhappy period, when the extravagances of those who had professed a more than ordinary zeal for the Gospel had driven men to a contrary extreme, and led them almost to expel the Gospel from their public ministrations. A concern to propagate the Gospel has arisen of late, and pervaded all ranks and orders of men. Even kings upon their thrones have used their influence to send the light of divine truth to the remotest nations of the earth, where not a ray of it had ever shone before. Nobles have also lent their influence, and even personally stood forth to advocate the cause of Christ before men: and vast assemblies of persons, who could find no other common ground to stand upon, have met, to advance the diffusion of divine knowledge, and to help forward, in every possible way, the salvation of the world. Societies have been formed, by every class of Christians, for the furtherance of this good work; and even the poorest in the land have gladly contributed their aid, that, through the collective efforts of the Christian world, ignorance might be banished from the earth, and that the light of the Gospel might shine into the hearts of the most benighted heathen. In this view, it may well be said of the great mass of the Christian community, that “they have a name to live.”]

But, though a profession of religion is general, the actual possession of it is rare—

[The greater part of these very persons, it is to be feared, whilst “they have a name to live, are dead.” Many have patronized the spread of the Bible, and promoted the reading of it by others, who yet have never had it written in their own hearts; and many have advocated its leading truths, who have never experienced them in their own souls. Many have spoken well about repentance, and faith, and obedience, as to be inculcated on others, who have never wept for their own sins; never fled to Christ for refuge from the wrath of God; never yielded up themselves as living sacrifices to God, to be employed, and, if need be, to be consumed for him. And

thousands have given liberally to God the pittance they could ill afford, who yet have never given to him their hearts, which alone is the gift that is acceptable to him. Yes, indeed, it is to be feared that the great mass of those who applaud themselves, and are applauded by others, as zealous for the truth, have never so much as had the first principles of the Gospel formed within them. They are still, in all other respects, the very same men that they were before they became thus active, and the same as other persons are who have never once concurred in any one of their benevolent pursuits.

Respecting some we may "hope better things." But even where there is some spiritual life, it is but a spark, which is scarcely seen under the embers by which it is obscured. The *frame* of the generality is by no means such as the Christian life requires. How little is there of real spirituality of mind, real delight in God, real devotedness of heart to his service! Where the souls of men are in a right state, a divine savour diffuses itself all around them, and they shine as lights in a dark world. But, if you look at those who appear so zealous for the diffusion of the Gospel amongst others, how few do you find of this character! Truly the state of the Sardian Church is realized to an awful extent amongst us: insomuch, that it may well be said of us, as it was of them, "Ye have a name that ye live, but are dead."]

Let me then, in CONCLUSION, urge upon you two important duties,

1. Examine into the real state of your souls before God—

[Be not satisfied with good appearances, or with the good opinion which others have formed respecting you. To what purpose will it be to "have a name to live, when the heart-searching God attests that ye are dead?" It is by his judgment, and not by that of men, that ye will stand or fall: and therefore you must rest in no state which does not approve itself to the heart-searching God. "Examine, then, whether ye be in the faith, and prove your own selves:" for, "not he that commendeth himself will be approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth."]

2. Look to the Lord Jesus Christ for the effectual aid of his Spirit—

[The Lord Jesus has *received* the Holy Spirit, in order that he may *give* it^d; and in him is a sufficiency for all your necessities. You cannot conceive of any want that there is in

^d Compare Ps. lxxviii. 18. with Eph. iv. 8.

you, but there is a corresponding fulness in him. Look, then, to Christ for the sevenfold gifts of his Spirit: so shall your future course be *bright and regular*, and God himself shall be glorified in your deportment.]

MMCCCCXCV.

EPISTLE TO SARDIS.

Rev. iii. 2. *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*

THESE words reflect the true light upon those which precede them. Our Lord did not intend to say that the Christians at Sardis were wholly destitute of life, but that they were in a state bordering upon it; none of their works approving them as perfect, either as to their number or their “intrinsic worth^a,” on the contrary, every thing which they did was sadly defective, and the “things which remained in them were ready to die.”

In the foregoing discourse, we traced somewhat of the resemblance which there is between the Church at Sardis and that which exists amongst us at this day. And in the counsel which our Lord gave to them we may undoubtedly find much that is applicable to ourselves. Let us, then, proceed to consider,

I. The state here described—

It is here acknowledged, that they did some works, though not in a perfect way; and that there were some good things remaining in them, though they were in so feeble a state that they were ready to die. Now, that we may be able to form a correct estimate of our own state, I will endeavour to shew, when the same kind of declension has taken place in us. We may discover it as having already taken place,

1. When our graces languish—

[The exercise of our graces is a sure test of the reality and degree of our spiritual life. We may form a judgment by examining them.

^a οὐ πεπληρωμένα.

Let us examine *our faith*.—The office of faith is, to realize invisible things: and when it is in vigorous exercise, “it is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen^b.” Then earth and heaven appear in their true colours; and the things of time and sense are lighter in our estimation than vanity itself, in comparison of those things which are invisible and eternal. Under the influence of this grace, both the promises and threatenings of God are regarded as no less certain than if they were already accomplished before our eyes; and the soul is stimulated by them to an active pursuit of its chief good. But let a man decline in his apprehension of invisible things, how clearly will the effect be seen in his whole deportment! The truths of God’s word, which were once so powerful, will lose their efficacy: the diligence which was once so constant and exemplary will be relaxed: and the man who was once so lively will become almost as one dead.

Let us examine also *our hope*.—As faith sees the reality, hope anticipates the enjoyment, of heavenly things: and when it is lively, it is an anchor of the soul, which keeps us steadfast, in the midst of all the storms and tempests with which we can be assailed. But oftentimes this is suffered to decline: and then the future prospects are less valued: and earthly things rise proportionably in importance. Then we are discouraged by any difficulties which we are called to contend with; and we lose our enjoyment of those things which formerly constituted our supreme felicity.

Let us further examine also *our love*.—Love is as wings to a believing soul: it carries us forward with ardour and delight. So greatly does it expand our views of duty, that it makes us dissatisfied with all we do, and urges us to the utmost exertions of which we are capable. But when love decays, we lose all our fervour in holy exercises: duties become a task and a burthen; and they are performed with less frequency and spirituality of mind. Then the hidings of God’s face, which once would have filled us with the deepest distress, are endured without much concern; and, whilst we feel indifferent about his return to our souls, we lose all our solicitude to please and honour him.

Now, I ask, what *can* indicate the dying state of a soul, if such a decay of our graces do not? Can any one doubt, but that a person who has so degenerated from a life of real godliness is fallen into the very state of those at Sardis?]

2. When our corruptions increase—

[Graces and corruptions are as the scales of a balance: whichever preponderate, the other kicks the beam. If, then,

^b Heb. xi. 1.

the decay of our graces manifest a decline in the divine life, so does the growth of our corruptions. Let us examine, therefore, respecting these.

The growth of these, and the consequent decay of the divine life, is manifest, *when our besetting sin resumes its former ascendancy*.—The effect of grace is to mortify our besetting sin. But that sin is rarely, if ever, so extinguished, but it continues, more or less, to harass and defile the soul: and it is sure to return when once we begin to decline from the ways of God; and by that, as much as by any thing, will our declension be discovered. It matters not what that besetting sin is, whether pride, or covetousness, or lust, or anger, or whatever else; if it regain its power over us, we may be sure that it goes ill with our souls.

The same decay is manifest, *if the natural hardness and obduracy of our heart return*.—Divine grace brings a tenderness of spirit, which shews itself very especially in a way of humiliation and contrition. On the other hand, the effect of sin is to blind the eyes and harden the heart. Now, if we find less sensibility in reference to sin, less aversion to commit it, or less compunction after the commission of it—if, I say, conscience be less active and powerful in the discharge of its office in relation to these things—there can be no doubt that at least a great torpor is come upon us, if we be not actually dead.

I add once more, that this decay is peculiarly manifest, *if we are unwilling to be reclaimed*.—A heart duly impressed with heavenly things desires the light: it longs for every instruction, whereby it may correct what is amiss, and prosecute with more success its way heavenward. But if a person be so fallen as to feel averse to instruction; if he hate to be told of his faults, and take offence at his monitor for his fidelity; if he palliate and excuse his errors; if he turn from the light, and go to company and worldly occupation in order to stifle his convictions and shake off his uneasiness; truly he is in a Sardian state indeed: for this is the worst symptom that a *living* soul can possibly experience.]

Now then, brethren, if you have obtained any insight into the condition of your own souls, listen, I pray you, to

II. Our Lord's counsel to persons in such a state—

None can need advice for their bodies more than such persons do for their souls. In the Lord's name, therefore, I say to you,

1. Be watchful—

[Be watchful *against self-deception*.—There are many things which may hide our condition from us. We may easily mistake our gifts for graces; and may ascribe to the special operation of the Spirit of God what is the result only of natural principles. There have been many amiable traits in the characters of heathens, which yet were widely different from the graces of the Spirit, and which consequently were no proofs that the persons exercising those virtues were children of God. We must therefore be peculiarly on our guard against this source of self-delusion. We may also be less sensible of decay, because it has come gradually upon us. And the heart itself will suggest many plausible excuses, in order to hide from us our real state: but we must remember that, though we may impose on ourselves and others, we cannot impose on God. And to this effect St. Paul cautions us; “Be not deceived: God is not mocked.”

I must say, too, Guard against *the occasions of sin*. A man of God must, as far as will consist with his duties in social life, flee from contagion, lest he be infected by the evils which prevail around him. Worldly business, worldly pleasure, worldly company, will, if not very carefully watched, draw the soul from God. Too unrestrained an use, even of lawful things, will damp our ardour in our heavenly course. There is not any thing of which we have not occasion to be jealous, lest it draw our souls from God, or interfere with our progress in the divine life. Especially must we be on our guard against a neglect of secret duties, or formality in the performance of them. No wonder our spirituality decays, if we be inattentive to the frame of our souls, or unwatchful against the very first symptoms of declension.]

2. “Strengthen the things that remain”—

[Doubtless it is the Lord Jesus Christ alone who can impart to you the strength you need: for “He has the seven Spirits of God;” and from him must you derive such “supplies of his Spirit” as your daily necessities require. All human endeavours without him will be in vain. Yet must you exert yourselves to the uttermost, and “work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” As bodily strength improves by exercise, so does the strength of the soul: and in proportion as you “stir up the gift of God that is in you,” your graces of faith and hope and love will be increased. If with all diligence you labour to add grace to grace, you are assured that “you shall never fall, but so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” In order to stimulate your

soul to such exertions, lay home upon your minds all the most forcible considerations which either your knowledge or experience can suggest. Think how painful it is to lose our spirituality of mind, and our sense of the Divine presence: consider how dishonourable it is to God, and how dangerous to our own souls. Supposing we be recovered from such a state, who can tell by what fearful chastisements the recovery may be effected? And who can tell, whether, instead of ever restoring us to his favour, God may not come, in righteous indignation, to execute upon us his threatened vengeance, and exclude us for ever, like the foolish and unwatchful virgins, from his presence? Supposing then, that, notwithstanding our declensions, there be some good thing remaining in us, let us "strengthen it" by every possible means, if peradventure our backslidings may ultimately be healed, and we may attain at last a preparation of heart to meet our God.]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who have no marks of life in them—

[If they who are in a declining state be in great danger because of their declensions, what, think you, must be your danger, in whom not even "the root of the matter" can be found? You may say, perhaps, 'I make no pretensions to religion, and therefore cannot be chargeable with a departure from it.' But I answer, This very acknowledgment involves in it a greater measure of guilt, than one would suppose any human being capable of contracting. We may suppose a creature to rebel against his Creator: we may even suppose a redeemed sinner to trample under foot the blood of his Redeemer, and to live altogether as "without God in the world." But that any man should glory in such a state, and *make the acknowledgment of it a ground of self-vindication*, THIS does really surpass any thing which we should imagine even Satan himself to be capable of committing. But to every one who so proclaims his own impiety, I must say, "Out of thine own mouth God will judge thee, thou wicked servant." Thou hast said to God, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" and He will say to thee, "Depart from me, I never knew thee, thou worker of iniquity;" "depart, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Keep on then, if ye will, and dream that no evil shall come upon you: but know, of a surety, that "your judgment lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not^d."]

2. Those who are "walking with God, as dear children"—

^d 2 Pet. ii. 3.

[We are told of "some at Sardis that had not defiled their garments:" and, I trust, there are some of that happy character amongst you. But, when I consider how awfully the great mass of the Sardian Church declined from God, I cannot but be "jealous over you with a godly jealousy, lest Satan by any means prevail" to impede your progress in the divine life^e. I would have you, even to your latest hour, to guard against pride and self-confidence, and to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." When you are weak, then it is that you are really strong." If you would be perfect, you must look to the Saviour to "perfect that which concerneth you." You must go on in a simple dependence on his power and grace; and commit yourselves to Him^f, of whom it is said, "He is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy: to whom be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen^g."]]

^e 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3.

^f 1 Pet. iv. 19.

^g Jude, ver. 24, 25.

MMCCCCXCVI.

EPISTLE TO SARDIS.

Rev. iii. 3. *Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*

IN the Church of God, there must, of necessity, be a great diversity of characters: and the office of a minister is, to make a just discrimination between them, and, like a steward in a great family, to give to every one of them his portion in due season. But to divide rightly the word of truth is no easy matter: it requires much knowledge, much discernment, and much fidelity. The pattern to be followed, is that which is set before us in the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia. In this epistle to the Church of Sardis, one-half is occupied with reproof. In the two preceding verses we have been led to assume the same tone as is there adopted: and we are constrained to continue it in the present discourse; wherein I shall have occasion to notice,

I. The state of a soul that is backslidden from God—

We shall confine our observations to the point especially referred to in our text; namely, the state of the soul in reference to divine ordinances.

A soul truly alive to God finds great delight in divine ordinances—

[They are regarded as God's appointed means of conferring his benefits upon the soul. The word is heard, not as the word of man, but as the word of God himself, speaking individually to the person's own soul. "It is received with meekness as an engrafted word, able to save the soul." The person, before he goes up to the house of God, implores the presence of God there; and begs that the word may not only be suited to his necessities, but may "come to him in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Whilst he is hearing the word, he begs of God so to apply it to him, that it may prove "the power of God to his everlasting salvation." After he has heard the word, he endeavours to harrow it in, and water it, with meditation and prayer; and implores help from God, that he may be enabled to carry into effect every lesson he has received.]

But to one who is in a backslidden state, the ordinances have lost a great measure of their interest—

[They are still attended, lest his declension should be made evident to common observation: but there is not that delight in them which was once experienced, nor that earnest expectation of good from them. The truths that are delivered fall upon a hard and rocky heart, from which Satan easily removes them, even as birds catch up the seed that falls by the way-side. The word is heard either with critical fastidiousness or with cold indifference; and produces neither self-abasement on account of sin, nor elevation of soul on account of the mercy that is there revealed. It is possible that such persons may yet take some pleasure in the ministration of the word, on account of the eloquence of him by whom it is dispensed: but whilst, with Ezekiel's hearers, "they listen as to one who plays well upon an instrument," like them they are proof against every admonition which is delivered. Even the strongest declarations of divine truth fail to make any lasting impression on their minds, or to effect any abiding change within them.]

Attend then, I pray you, whilst I declare to you,

II. The duty of one who is in such a state—

1. "Remember" whence you are fallen—

[Look back, and see how great a change has taken place upon you. Call to mind the delight you once felt in divine ordinances, and the benefit you derived from them; and compare with those seasons your present coldness and insensibility. What reason can you assign for this melancholy change? Are not the truths as important as ever? and ought they not to be equally influential on your souls? — — —]

2. “Hold fast” whatever there is of good impression on your minds—

[The truths ye received are yet abiding with you: let them, then, be retained with care and steadfastness: for, if ye let them go, ye have no other anchor for your souls, no other refuge from the wrath of God. I would fondly hope, too, that there are yet within you some good desires, some holy purposes and resolutions: I charge you then, “Hold *them* also fast:” and beg of God, that, through the influence of his Holy Spirit, you may be enabled to carry them into full effect — — —]

“Repent” also of these shameful, these dangerous declensions—

[Think not that gross outward transgressions alone call for penitence: the inward frame of a man’s soul is as hateful to God in those who profess godliness, as the more flagrant acts of wickedness are in one who makes no profession. Think of the ingratitude which such a declension betrays: Is it for *this* that God has quickened you from the dead, and revealed his Son in you, and given you such an experience of his power and grace? Is *this* the return which he has a right to expect? Think, too, of the folly of such a conduct. Do you hope for the pardon of your sins, and peace with God, and glory in a better world? and are you wise in casting it all away, or in endangering the loss of it by departing from God? I tell you, that the deepest penitence becomes you. Yes, “be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness; and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, if peradventure, in the multitude of his tender mercies, he may lift you up.”]

And, that you may comply with these exhortations, consider,

III. The extreme urgency of this duty—

Your Lord threatens to “come upon you as a thief in the night,” to visit upon you your inexcusable neglect.

This you have but too great reason to expect—

[Many in your state comfort themselves with the hope that God will not proceed against them; but that in consideration of what he has already done for their souls, he will, by some special act of his grace, restore them to his favour. They will say, "Where God has begun a good work, he will carry it on, and perfect it till the day of Christ:" and "whomsoever he loves, he will love unto the end." But will any man take occasion, from such passages as these, to comfort himself while at a distance from God, and to delay his return to God? Will any man "continue thus in sin that grace may abound?" A more damning sin than this it is scarcely possible for him to commit. Brethren, if there be one amongst you disposed to abuse in this manner the grace of the Gospel, let him know that he is as nigh to hell as a man can well be, and that it will be a miracle of mercy if he be not in hell before the light of another day: for our Lord's express declaration is, that "He will come upon him as a thief in the night, and not let him know what hour he will come upon him." And this is agreeable to what all the inspired writers have taught. Hear the Prophet Hosea: "Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me^a." "Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him^b." Hear our blessed Lord: "Watch; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh. And if he find any servant unwatchful, the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth^c." To the same effect speaks St. Paul also^d— And in the epistles before us the same menace is used again and again^e. Know, therefore, and be assured, that in perverting the truths of Scripture you do but aggravate and ensure your eternal condemnation.]

Awake then, brethren, to your duty, ere it be too late—

[To have "a form of godliness, whilst you are destitute of its power," is only to deceive your own souls. Look back, and see how you received the word at first; and get back to

^a Hos. vii. 13, 14.

^b Hos. viii. 3.

^c Matt. xxiv. 42—44, 50, 51.

^d 1 Thess. v. 2, 3, 6.

^e Rev. ii. 5. and iii. 11.

that childlike spirit which ye then manifested. Your brokenness of heart should be increased rather than diminished; and your tenderness of conscience should be found in full activity. To turn back from these holy ways is to "turn back unto perdition." May God Almighty spare you yet a little longer, till you have recovered from your declension, and are returned to Christ as the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls! Let this be well settled in your minds, that the only way to ensure the not being taken unprepared, is to watch for the coming of your Lord, with loins ever girt, and your lamp ever trimmed.]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are so far backslidden as to be insensible to their state—

[This, alas! is no uncommon state: for the necessary effect of sin is, to grieve the Spirit of God, and to harden the heart of man. But if God should not cut you off suddenly, though it is greatly to be feared that he will, tell me what you will think of your present state, when you shall be lying on your bed, in the near approach of death and judgment? Let me tell you, that every hour you neglect to turn unto your God, you are filling your dying pillow with thorns, and, alas! are "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." God has indeed said, that "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways^f:" and this may be your unhappy state, in a dying hour: you may be then cherishing the same delusions which you harbour now, and be even more hardened than you are at the present moment. But at the bar of judgment, if not before, you will surely know, "that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart from God."]

2. Those who are ashamed and confounded on account of their declensions—

[To *you* I would speak in a way of encouragement. God himself, as it were, feels for you, and is averse to execute upon you the judgments you deserve. Hear how he speaks concerning you: "My people are bent to backsliding from me. Though they called them unto the Most High, none at all would exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee up, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together: I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger^g." Nor is Jehovah merely thus tenderly concerned for you: he bids you return to him; and puts into your mouth words for that very purpose, even words to which he will return an answer of peace: "Take

^f Prov. xiv. 14.

^g Hos. xi. 7—9.

with you words, and turn unto the Lord : say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips." Then he adds, "I will heal their backslidings, and love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him^h." The same gracious overtures he makes through the Prophet Jeremiahⁱ—; and the whole of his dealings with his people fully attest his readiness to fulfil these promises in their utmost extent. Then continue not at a distance from him; but avail yourselves of his gracious invitations; so, at whatever hour he shall come, you shall be found ready, and "enter for ever into the joy of your Lord."]

^h Hos. xiv. 1, 2, 4.

ⁱ Jer. iii. 12, 22.

MMCCCCXCVII.

EPISTLE TO SARDIS.

Rev. iii. 4—6. *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

IN all the preceding part of this epistle, we have been necessitated to dwell almost exclusively on matters calling for reproof. It is with pleasure that we now turn to a subject of commendation. There were, even in the degenerate Church at Sardis, some who walked worthy of their heavenly calling, and were therefore honoured with peculiar marks of the Divine favour: and we shall find it profitable to consider,

I. Their conduct—

Under two distinct images this is set forth. We notice,

1. Their walk—

["They kept their garments undefiled," in the midst of an ensnaring and polluted world. It was no little honour to them, to receive from the heart-searching God such a testimony as this. The world, in all its parts, has a tendency to

defile the soul. Its maxims and habits are all contrary to the mind of God: and all its votaries carry with them a contagion which spreads itself with fatal effect wherever they come. Now, to walk in the midst of such a world is dangerous in the extreme; and few can do it without contracting much defilement to their souls. But there were “a few in Sardis” who did so. Though *in* the world, they were not *of* the world; but, notwithstanding the intercourse which from time to time they had maintained with the world, they had been “delivered from the evil of it.” They had not been drawn aside by “the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life^a,” but had “walked holily, and justly, and unblameably, in the whole tenour of their conversation^b.” We are not to suppose that they were so perfect, that never a spot of sin was contracted by them; for “in many things we all offend^c,” and “there is not a just man on earth that liveth and sinneth not^d,” but in the habit, both of their minds and lives, they were “blameless and harmless, as sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shining among them as lights in the world^e.”]

2. Their victory—

[In process of time “they overcame;” as indeed all shall eventually do, if only they “walk with God,” and “keep themselves unspotted from the world.” They cannot hope to differ so widely from all the maxims and habits of the world, and yet experience no opposition from those whom they so condemn. “If they will live godly in Christ Jesus, they must suffer persecution^f.” But they were alike superior to the terrors and the allurements of the world; being neither deterred from duty by the one, nor allured to any evil by the other. They fought manfully against all the enemies of their salvation; and never ceased to fight, till all their enemies, and “Satan himself at their head, were bruised under their feet.”]

True, they were but few in number; but they were not discouraged by this: they would “not follow a multitude to do evil.” It was no question with them, whether others acted agreeably to God’s commands: the question was, What has God required? and, having once ascertained that, they could not be prevailed upon, by any consideration whatever, to decline the path of duty, or to violate any obligation that lay upon them. They knew it to be their duty to “shine as lights in the world;” and they endeavoured “so to make their light shine, that all who beheld them should be constrained to glorify their Father who was in heaven.”]

^a 1 John ii. 15, 16.

^b 1 Thess. ii. 10.

^c Jam. iii. 2.

^d 1 Kings viii. 46.

^e Phil. ii. 15.

^f 2 Tim. iii. 12.

In exact accordance with their conduct is,

II. Their reward—

The coincidence between their conduct and the reward assigned them is remarkable: they had so walked as to “keep their garments clean,” and to honour their Lord before men; and they shall henceforth “walk with their Lord in white,” and “be honoured by him in the presence of his Father and his holy angels.”

Here, you will observe, are promised to them,

1. The full fruition of all the objects they sought—

[They were, as indeed all true believers are, “a holy priesthood” to the Lord. To him they offered the sacrifices of prayer and praise continually; yea, they yielded up themselves as living sacrifices to the Lord. For God also they maintained a contest against the world and the flesh and the devil; and they approved themselves in all things as “good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” Now, the priests were clad in white; as was even the high-priest himself, when he went within the vail. And conquerors, too, when they went in triumphant procession, were also robed in white. Now, says our blessed Lord, ye, in both capacities, shall have your wishes fully accomplished; for in every respect ye are worthy of the honour which I am about to confer upon you. In both the foregoing respects I have preceded you: I offered myself a sacrifice to God; and am now within the vail, enjoying the nearest possible access to him. I also fought and overcame, and am enjoying all the fruits of victory at the right hand of God. To me therefore shall ye, who have followed me in these respects, be for ever assimilated, and with me shall be partakers of all my blessedness. With me ye walked in this world: with me shall ye walk in the world above. With me ye walked so warily as to keep your garments undefiled: and with me shall ye walk in white for ever, beyond the possibility of ever contracting defilement; having a far nearer access to God than ever ye could attain on earth; and crowned with glory, far beyond all that in your earthly state it was possible for you to enjoy. I regard you as “worthy” of this honour; not indeed on account of any *merit* that there was even in your best services, but as possessing a meetness for it. Your whole life was a state of preparation for this honour; and I proclaim you both meet for it, and worthy of it.]

2. The public approbation of the Lord whom they served—

[For the Lord's sake they had given up their names to reproach, so that their enemies, and even their friends and relatives, had been ready to blot out their names from any book where they might be had in remembrance.^a To such a degree had they been despised, that "they were counted as the very filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things^b." To these things had they meekly submitted, even to their dying hour, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for their Lord's sake^b." In return for these services, the Lord promises them, "I will not blot out your names from the book of life: on the contrary, I will confess your names before my Father and his holy angels;" I will proclaim you as faithful servants; I will acknowledge you as beloved friends; I will honour you in the presence of the whole assembled universe, as partakers of my throne, and as heirs of my glory. Your work shall be seen in your reward; and your reward shall bear proportion to your work.]

And now "let him that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." Hear,

1. Ye who complain of piety as needless preciseness—

[Suppose you saw a man clothed in white garments, and walking in the midst of dirty and crowded streets; and were told, that the man's life depended on his keeping his garments clean from the morning even unto night: would you wonder that he was circumspect, and on his guard against coming in contact with that which would defile him? Would you wonder that he endeavoured so to take every step, that he might ultimately attain his end, and approve himself to the person that should inspect his garments at the close of the day? What mean ye then by condemning the Christian for his holy walk, and by deriding it as needless preciseness? That it differs from those around him, I grant: and I think ye will clearly see, how much the walk of these favoured "few at Sardis," must have differed from that of those, who "had a name to live, but were dead." I tell you, brethren, it *must* be so: and every one of you, who will be approved of the Lord in the last day, must "have the mind which was in Christ Jesus," and "walk even as he walked" ————]

2. Ye who dare to be singular in an ungodly world—

[Amidst the Church of Sardis there were "a few," and *only a few*, who walked acceptably to God. But *was this their fault?* All the others should have resembled them: and if

^a 1 Cor. iv. 13. ^b Acts v. 41.

they would not, it was to the honour of that little band that they dared to be singular. But let me not be misunderstood. I am not recommending singularity *in matters of indifference*: no: such affectation I greatly disapprove: but, in things which are of importance to the welfare of the soul, we should know no example but that of Christ and his Apostles, nor any rule but the written word of God: and if others will not walk with us in this way, and agreeably to this rule, we must say, with Joshua, "Whatever the whole world may do, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lordⁱ." Go on, brethren, even though ye be like Noah in the antediluvian world, or like Lot in Sodom. If others be careless of their walk, "keep ye your garments clean." And if others be offended at your singularity, and "cast out your name as evil on account of it," let it suffice to know, that "your names are written in heaven;" and that, when your adversaries shall be disclaimed by God as unworthy of the least mercy, ye shall be approved, as worthy of all the honour and blessedness that your God and Saviour can confer upon you.]

ⁱ Josh. xxiv. 15.

MMCCCCXCVIII.

EPISTLE TO PHILADELPHIA.

Rev. iii. 7, 8. *To the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works.*

THOSE who imagine that the letters to the seven Churches refer, in a prophetic way, to different periods of the Church, consider this as descriptive of the Millennial age. It is true, there is in this epistle nothing brought forward as matter of reprehension; nor is there any threatening contained in it; but it is very far from answering to that elevation of piety which the whole Scriptures teach us to expect in that day. The particulars addressed to this Church will be considered in our next discourse: at present, we confine our attention to the introductory part of it; in which, as in all the other epistles, we notice the description which our blessed Lord gives of his own character. The attributes ascribed to him are,

I. Essential, and personal—

He is here spoken of as “He that is holy, and He that is true.” Now, as man, he answered to this character: for he gave to his bitterest enemies this challenge, “Which of you convinceth me of sin^a.” And when they had sought by all possible means to find a flaw in him, they were constrained to acknowledge that “they could find in him no fault at all^b?” And, so far as truth is concerned, no person was able to controvert or contradict one word he ever spake: he was in all things, and on all occasions, “the True and Faithful Witness^c.” But He is not merely holy and true, as all his servants are: no; he is the Holy One, who is truth itself, even “God over all,” essentially and immutably possessing these attributes in all their fulness. He may, in a sense inapplicable to any created being, be designated,

“He that is holy”—

[Holiness is an essential attribute of the Deity. The angels around his throne celebrate this perfection, saying, “Holy, Holy Holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory^d.” Indeed, in a more especial manner is this attribute acknowledged; since, in a peculiar and pre-eminent degree, he is distinguished by it: “Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness^e?” The very name, “The Holy One,” and, “The Holy One of Israel,” is that by which Jehovah is most commonly designated. And it is so identified with Deity, as to be incommunicable to any creature whatever: “Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God^f.” Yet is this the name by which Christ, the great Bridegroom of the Church is called: “Thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called^g.” To him is this name expressly applied, both in citations from the Old Testament, and in direct affirmations by the inspired Apostles. St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declares, that in the resurrection of Jesus that Scripture was fulfilled, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption^h.” And in his

^a John viii. 46.

^b John xviii. 38. and xix. 4—6.

^c ver. 14.

^d Isai. vi. 3.

^e Exod. xv. 11.

^f Isai. xlviii. 17.

^g Isai. liv. 5.

^h Acts ii. 27. with Ps. xvi. 10.

very next address to the Jews, he charges home upon them their sin in these words: "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Lifeⁱ." It is remarkable, that even the devils were constrained to acknowledge Jesus under this character: "Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God^k."

To him, in like manner, may be applied the name,]

"He that is true"—

[Truth is also an attribute of the Deity. Moses says of him, "A God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is He." He is a "God that *cannot* lie^l." So of Jesus is this same perfection predicated, as constituting an essential and immutable part of his character: "God has given us an understanding, that we may know *Him that is true*; and we are in *Him that is true*, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is *the True God*, and *Eternal Life*^m."

It must be remembered, that in several parts of the description given of Jesus, in these different epistles, his Divine character is particularly marked. "He who was dead, and is alive again," is expressly called, "The First and the Lastⁿ;" which cannot possibly be applied to any but the one true God. We therefore recognize in the characters assigned to Him in my text, not only his pre-eminence *as man*, but his essential character *as God*.]

We now proceed to notice the Lord Jesus in that part of his character which is,

II. Ministerial and official—

What is said of his "having the key of David" will be best understood by referring to that passage in the prophecies of Isaiah from whence the words are taken. Shebna had been "treasurer over the king's house," under Ahaz and Hezekiah: but, for his pride and carnal security, God determined to cast him out, even as a ball is cast out from a sling; and to substitute, in his place, Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah^o, to whom should henceforth be given the key of the house of David, so that he should manage every thing with uncontrolled authority, opening where no man should shut, and shutting where no man should

ⁱ Acts iii. 14, 15.

^k Luke iv. 33, 34.

^l Tit. i. 2.

^m 1 John v. 20.

ⁿ Rev. ii. 8.

^o Isai. xxii. 15—20.

open^p." The key that was put upon his shoulder was an emblem of his authority: and in the whole of this office he was a type of Jesus Christ, who, in his mediatorial capacity, was elevated to the throne of David^q, and invested with all power to govern his people agreeably to his sovereign will. This power he exercises,

1. Over the world—

[Seated at the right hand of God, "he doth according to his will, in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth; nor can any stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" So unlimited is his government, that "not so much as a sparrow falls to the ground" without his special permission.]

2. Over the Church—

[This is his more special charge. He is constituted "Head over all things to the Church," that he may order every thing for its edification and advancement^s. To his servants, who go forth to preach his Gospel, he "opens a great and effectual door" which none can shut, or interposes his prohibition, as seems good in his sight^t. To his providential care it must be ascribed, that the Church has stood its ground amidst the most inveterate enemies, and been kept alive as a spark in the midst of a tempestuous ocean. He said that "the gates of hell should never prevail against his Church;" and he has fulfilled his word, even to the present hour. The most powerful nations have been brought to nought: but of his Church and kingdom there shall be no end.]

3. Over every individual in the Church—

[It is particularly said of Eliakim, that "he should be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah:" and this office does Jesus execute towards every one of his people. It is not possible adequately to express either his affection for them, or his care over them. Suffice it to say, that "not so much as a hair is suffered to fall from the head of any one of them," except as He is pleased to permit. Conceive of a steward, at the head of a large family; how anxious will he be to provide for every member of that family his portion in due season! So shall every the least and meanest of the saints be supplied out of the fulness that is in Christ

^p Isai. xxii. 21, 22.

^q Luke i. 32, 33.

^r Dan. iv. 35.

^s Eph. i. 22, 23.

^t 1 Cor. xvi. 9, with Acts xvi. 6—9.

^u Isai. xxii. 21.

Jesus, and be furnished with every thing that he stands in need of, for body and for soul, for time and for eternity. With uncontrollable sovereignty will he appoint to all, as he sees fit; at the same time that every thing is ordered by him with unerring wisdom and incessant care: nor against any one of his appointments shall all the powers of darkness prevail. His power is irresistible; and in every case, without exception, "his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his will^x."

This is the power committed to him from above; and, as long as there shall continue any scope for the exercise of his mediatorial office, he will exercise it for the good of his Church and people. But, when the end shall be fully come, then will he deliver up this kingdom to the Father's hands, and "God shall be all in all^y."

SEE then,

1. To whom we are to approve ourselves—

[It is not man's judgment that we should regard; but the judgment of Him whose holiness will try our most secret thoughts, and whose truth will assign to every one his portion in perfect conformity with the written word. As for man, he, be his judgment what it may, can neither open heaven, nor shut it: but Jesus has "the keys of hell and of death^z;" and, if he open heaven to those who are waiting for him, none shall shut it against them: nor, if he shut heaven against the unwatchful, shall all the entreaties that can ever be urged prevail to gain them admission. I charge you then, brethren, to remember that admonition which he gives to all his Churches without exception; "I know thy works;" for, most assuredly, according to what he sees and knows, respecting every one of us, will his sentence of admission or exclusion be. Then, at all events, whatever his present forbearance may lead us to imagine, "will he judge with righteousness, and reprove with equity; and righteousness will be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins^a."

2. On whom, in all things, we are to depend—

[To Christ alone are we to look, both as our Advocate and our Head. He has all fulness committed to him on purpose for us; and we are to receive out of that fulness, according to our wants. Of Eliakim it is said, "They shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all the vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups even to all the vessels of flagons^b." And this shews on whom we are to rely, even every one of us, from the least

^x Isai. xlvi. 10.

^y 1 Cor. xv. 28.

^z Rev. i. 18.

^a Isai. xi. 4, 5.

^b Isai. xxii. 24.

to the greatest. All of us must “live” by faith on him, even “by faith in the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us^c.” Let us but look to him, and we have nothing to fear: for he is able to supply our every want, “that we, having *always all-sufficiency in all things*, may abound unto every good work^d,” and “have an abundant entrance ministered unto us into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ^e.”]

^c Gal. ii. 20.

^d 2 Cor. ix. 8.

^e 2 Pet. i. 10, 11.

MMCCCCXCIX.

EPISTLE TO PHILADELPHIA.

Rev. iii. 8—11. *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

IN this Church, as in that at Smyrna, the Lord saw nothing to condemn: and therefore, in the epistle written to them, there is not a word either of reproof or threatening. It is true, that the commendations bestowed on them are not so copious and energetic as those in which some others of the Churches were addressed: but it is no little praise to them, that nothing was found among them deserving of reproof. Such a mediocrity of character is by no means displeasing in the sight of God. For, granting that a man's piety is not so exalted in some respects as that of others, yet, if it is without that unhappy alloy which in many cases debases and degrades the profession of more distinguished Christians, it is more acceptable to God on the whole. We read of some who were “as a cake not turned^a,” burnt up, as it

^a Hos. vii. 8.

were, on one side, while they are altogether doughty on the other. In contradistinction to such characters, *they* more approve themselves as “sons of God, who are blameless and harmless, and without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation^b.”

The words which I have read contain the entire address of our Lord to the Church of Philadelphia; with the exception of the concluding promise to those who shall finally overcome in the Christian warfare; which promise forms the close of every epistle. That I may bring it before you in one entire view, and render it as useful as I can to ourselves, I will consider,

I. The peculiar subjects here addressed to them—

The subjects will all appear in their order, if we mark,

1. The testimony borne—

[Our blessed Lord had “set before that Church an open door” for the ministration of the Gospel and the enjoyment of its blessings; and, by his special providence, had taken care that “no man should shut it.” Great opposition, indeed, had been made to them, and the most violent persecution had raged against them: but they “had kept the word of Christ,” even “the word of his patience;” which is so called, because no man ever embraces it aright without having abundant occasion for patience, whilst he holds it fast, and endeavours to adorn it by a suitable conversation. The trials they had endured in consequence of adhering to that word had been exceeding heavy. Yet, notwithstanding “they possessed but little strength, they had approved themselves faithful to their Lord, and could in no instance be prevailed upon to “deny his name.”

Now, this was an honourable testimony; and the more so, because “their strength was small.” If their talents were few, they endeavoured to employ them to the honour of their Lord: and they thereby performed towards him a good and acceptable service.]

2. The promise given—

[This was suited to the occasion. There were coming upon the Church trials far more severe than any they had yet endured. The persecution under the Emperor Trajan

^b Phil. ii. 15.

seems to be that which is here more particularly referred to: for that was of fourteen years' duration, and destroyed many thousands of Christians throughout all the Roman Empire. God permitted these persecutions to arise, "for the trying of his people," and the making of a visible distinction between those who were upright and those who were dissemblers with God. Now, to these persecutions the Church of Philadelphia would have been exposed in as great a degree as others, if God had not, in part, averted the storm: but He, in mercy to his faithful people, and as a recompence of their fidelity, screened them in some measure from the violence of the tempest, and, by the mighty working of his power, enabled them to sustain whatever portion of it was permitted to fall upon them: thus fulfilling to them that precious promise, "God is faithful; who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it^c."

But he further assured them, for their comfort, that those Judaizing teachers who boasted of their eminence as Christians, while they were in fact no Christians at all, but "of the synagogue of Satan;" that they, I say, who were their most inveterate enemies, "should come and worship at their feet," and "confess that these very persons whom they had persecuted were indeed the favourites of their God." Such cases had often occurred, in the history of the Lord's people^d; and such should occur to them. In what way, and to what extent, this was fulfilled to them, we are not informed: but there can be no doubt, but that, in many instances, their piety was instrumental to the conviction of their enemies, and, in many instances too, to their conversion: so that what had been fulfilled in the Centurion at our Lord's death^e, and in the Jailor at Philippi^f, was, to a very great extent, realized in them; agreeably to that prophetic declaration, "The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and all they that despised thee shall bow down themselves at the soles of thy feet: and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel^g."]

3. The caution administered—

[Blameless as they were, and hitherto victorious, yea, and protected by the special providence of their God, yet did they need to be stirred up to holy vigilance, and to persevering exertion in the divine life. Thus far they were entitled to a crown of life: but still they were on the field of battle, and

^c 1 Cor. x. 13.

^e Matt. xxvii. 54.

^g Isai. lx. 14.

^d Gen. l. 15—17. Esth. viii. 17.

^f Acts xvi. 33, 34.

must not indulge security or remissness, "lest their crown should, after all, be lost." True, the time for their sufferings and their labours was but short, because their "Lord was coming quickly," to terminate the one, and to reward the other. But still, till he should come, and dismiss them from their warfare, they must "hold fast" every principle they had received, and every practice they had maintained: for on their steadfastness, in fact, depended the final possession of their crown. If they "turned back, it would be unto perdition^h;" and "if they were again overcome by the world which they had vanquished, their last end would be worse than their beginningⁱ." It was only "by being faithful unto death, that they could finally secure the crown of life^k."]

Having thus brought into view the substance of our Lord's address to this highly-favoured Church, and opened the subjects contained in it, I proceed to point out,

II. The improvement which we should make of them, for our benefit at this time—

Truly, in these subjects, we may find much,

1. To encourage the weak—

[Many are discouraged because "they have but little strength." But what a mercy is it to possess any strength at all! The great mass of mankind are led captive by their spiritual enemies, yea, "are led captive by the devil at his will." Surely, then, to have strength for the combat, even though it be but little, is a blessing for which we never can be sufficiently thankful. Be it so, "our enemies live and are mighty:" but still, "He that dwelleth on high is mightier;" and His strength, if only we trust in him, "shall be made perfect in our weakness^l." It should seem that our God and Saviour takes peculiar care to impress on our minds a sense of our weakness, on purpose that we may be led the more simply and implicitly to trust in him. What is weaker than a sheep in the midst of devouring wolves and lions? yet, says our blessed Lord, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom^m." We cannot conceive of any thing more disproportionate than the power of a worm to effect any extensive change upon a mountain: yet says God to his people, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob: for thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff, fanning them with irresistible

^h Heb. x. 39.

ⁱ 2 Pet. ii. 20.

^k Rev. ii. 10.

^l 2 Cor. xii. 19.

^m Luke xii. 32.

power, and scattering them as a whirlwindⁿ." Who, then has any reason to despond or be discouraged on account of either the power of his enemies, or the smallness of his own strength? Only see what God enabled the Philadelphian Christians, notwithstanding their weakness, to effect; and the very least amongst you may find reason to "glory rather in your infirmities, because, when you are weak, then are you really strong^o." Not but that we should desire to grow "from babes to young men, and from young men to fathers;" but in a sense of our extreme weakness we never can exceed. To our latest hour we must be "strong only in the Lord, and in the power of his might:" and, if we be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," then shall "we be able to do all things through the strength that we derive from Him^p," and shall "be more than conquerors through Him that loveth us^q."]

2. To establish the wavering—

[Who is there that has not been tempted, on some occasions, to a dereliction of his duty? If the Christians of the Philadelphian Church, blameless as they were, and steadfast as they had been in such violent persecutions, yet needed that solemn admonition, "Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown," surely we, who have been so often drawn aside by the allurements of the world, and the corruptions of our hearts; and the devices of our great enemy, need to have it impressed deeply on our minds. Now, let me suppose one of you to be going into worldly company and worldly pleasures, or to be plunging yourselves unnecessarily into worldly cares; and to be at the same time, as must necessarily be the case, declining in spirituality of mind, and in heavenly zeal; what shall I say to you? What? O think what you have at stake, and are likely to lose—a "crown!" a kingdom! Again, if there be one of you that is yielding to the fear of man, or "putting his light under a bushel" for fear of its offending some friend, some patron, or some enemy; What shall I say to you also, but this? Think what you have at stake—a "crown!" a kingdom! Who, in his senses, would risk the loss of this, for any thing that this world could give or take away? I pray you, contemplate the glory and felicity of heaven: yea, and take into the account, also, the sad alternative—the shame and misery of hell. Will you expose yourselves to the loss of the one, and the consequent endurance of the other, for any transient pleasure, or to avoid any momentary pain? O beg of God, I pray you, that you may not "fall from your own steadfastness^r," and "make shipwreck of your faith." What

ⁿ Isai. xli. 14—16.

^o 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

^p Phil. iv. 13.

^q Rom. viii. 37.

^r 2 Pet. iii. 17.

does Demas now think of his apostasy? And what will you think, in a little time, of all which appears now so fascinating to your minds? I charge you, brethren, before God, yield not to the tempter; but “be steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord^s.”]

3. To humble the self-confident—

[What would those, of whom our Lord speaks in my text, who “said they were Jews, the real people of the Lord, whilst they were not, but did lie, and were in reality of the synagogue of Satan;” what, I say, would they have replied to the accusation in my text? Methinks, there would have been no bounds to their indignation. But it was true, notwithstanding. And it is true, also, of many at this day. A proud sceptic or infidel will call himself a Christian: but “he lies.” A conceited and contentious heretic, who has no zeal but for some notions of his own, with which he labours to divide the Church of Christ, may call himself a Christian: but “he also lies.” To come nearer home, the man who, like the Judaizing Christians, hates the simple doctrine of salvation by faith, and, from a pretended zeal for good works, blends the law with the Gospel as a joint ground of his hope, he, I say, will account himself a Christian of the highest caste and character: but “he lies;” for “he is a perverter of the Gospel,” and is, in reality, “of the synagogue of Satan:” and, if he were an angel from heaven, I must say of him, as St. Paul does, “Let him be accursed^t.” Now, I am aware that this seems harsh: but what is to be done? It is not I who speak these things, but the Lord: and I dare not keep back his word. I must, at the peril of my own soul, “declare his whole counsel.” Whoever then thou art, that professest thyself a Christian, whilst thou art essentially defective either in the principles or tempers of Christianity, I must warn thee against thy delusions, and tell thee that thou deceivest thine own soul. O that God would humble thee, ere it be too late; and make thee to see, that none but the broken and contrite in heart can ever find favour in his sight! The poor believer, who trembles at his word, and looks to Christ alone for salvation, is “the only person that is beloved of his God.” Come then, and seek salvation in *His* way: seek it simply and entirely by faith in Christ: then shall you also find acceptance with God, and be made “partakers of the felicity of his chosen.” But, if ye will persist in your enmity to God, and his Christ, and his people, know, that ye shall have your portion with him “of whose synagogue ye are:” for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. To the impenitent and unbelieving

^s 1 Cor. xv. 58.

^t Gal. i. 7—9.

“there remains nothing but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation to consume them^u.” The Lord avert from you that fate, for Christ’s sake!]

^u Heb. x. 26, 27.

MMD.

EPISTLE TO PHILADELPHIA.

Rev. iii. 12, 13. *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

HEAR—hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches, and to every individual soul that hath an ear to hear it. We have already heard “exceeding great and precious promises” made unto the Church: but in the passage before us there is a grandeur which overpowers the mind, and a depth which it is scarcely possible to fathom. What a thought! that you, who are here assembled, are soon to be made pillars in the temple of God above, provided you now “fight the good fight of faith,” and obtain the victory over the enemies of your souls! Attend then, I pray you, and lift up your hearts to God for his blessing, whilst I endeavour to set before you,

I. The reward prepared for God’s victorious servants—

They shall be pillars in the temple of the Lord—

[The precise import of this promise it is not easy to declare; because the allusion which is here made to pillars erected in heathen temples had not any thing to correspond with it in the temple of Solomon. As for the two pillars named Jachin and Boaz, they were in the porch of the temple, and not in the temple itself; nor had they any inscription whatever upon them^a. For the elucidation of our subject, we must look, not to *them*, but to a practice which obtained

^a 1 Kings vii. 21.

amongst the Greeks and Romans, of erecting monuments to their generals, who had obtained great success against their enemies. These were often pillars, with inscriptions on them; and they were placed, sometimes near the temples of their gods, and sometimes within them. 'Now,' says our blessed Lord, 'such pillars my victorious saints shall be in heaven: "I will make them pillars in the temple of my God."' And whereas the pillars constructed in earthly temples must in time fall to decay, the saints should retain their honour through eternal ages: "They shall go no more out:" the temple in which they are placed shall stand: and they also shall endure as long as heaven itself shall endure, even through all eternity.]

On them, also, shall there be a suitable inscription—

[On the pillars in the heathen temples were inscribed the name of the god to whose power they ascribed the victories, and whom they sought to honour as the author of them. There was also written the name of the city that had given birth to this great general, or been the peculiar place of his residence: and further, there was inscribed also the name of the sovereign whose servant he was, or of the commander under whose direction he fought.

Now, in conformity with these customs, our Lord says, that on his people, who shall themselves be the pillars, he will "write" the name of "his God;" (for Jesus, as Man and as Mediator, calls Jehovah "*his* Father and *our* Father, and *his* God and *our* God:") yes, the name of Jehovah, who enabled them to gain the victory, and to whom alone the glory of it is due, shall be written upon them.

On them also shall be written "the name of the city of his God, the New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from his God." The New Jerusalem is the Church of God^b. And it "comes down from God out of heaven," precisely as the tabernacle and temple did; a model of the one being shewn to Moses for a pattern^c, and to David for the other^d. This descent of the city from heaven is repeatedly mentioned in the Holy Scriptures^e: and it is deserving of particular notice in this place, because there is not a stone in the whole building which was not taken out from the quarry by God himself, and formed and fashioned for its station. The strokes that are given to each stone with the hammer and the chisel, are given in this world, at a distance from the temple above. When the stones are carried thither, the sound of any tool is not once

^b Gal. iv. 25, 26.

^c Exod. xxv. 40.

^d 1 Chron. xxviii. 12, 19.

^e Rev. xxi. 2, 10.

heard^f; every stone being already fitted for the place, which, in His sovereign will, he has ordained it to occupy.

Further, on them also will our blessed Lord “write his new name, JESUS,” which was given him at his birth: for He it is who called them to be soldiers, and directed all their efforts, and strengthened them for the combat, and beat down their enemies before their face; and, consequently, to Him also, as the Captain of their salvation, must all honour be ascribed.

Now then I say, “Hear,” brethren, if indeed “ye have ears to hear,” what inconceivable honour is reserved for God’s faithful servants: and attend yet further, whilst I endeavour to point out to you,]

II. The excellency of this reward—

Methinks, nothing can add to the terms that are here used, or enhance the grandeur of the description here given. Yet it may be well to consider this reward in the light in which it will then appear:

1. As the consummation of God’s eternal purposes—

[From all eternity did God determine to take unto himself a people from our fallen race, and to exalt them to thrones of glory in his kingdom. From all eternity, also, did he “predestinate persons to be his adopted children^g,” and “choose them unto salvation^h,” even to that very salvation which they will in due time enjoy. In their appointed season he “called them by his grace, and justified” them from their sins, and sanctified them by his Spirit: and when they shall be “glorifiedⁱ,” then shall all his counsels be fulfilled, and all the wonders of his love be unravelled, from beginning to end. Then will the reason of all his dispensations appear; just as does the reason of the builder’s conduct towards every individual stone of a pillar, when it shall be found in a place ordained for it. O! how will this enhance the value of the reward, when the conferring of it shall be found to have occupied the Divine mind from all eternity; and all the wisdom, and power, and love, and faithfulness of God shall be seen to have been employed in preparing the soul for the enjoyment of it.]

2. As the completion of all Christ’s glorious engagements—

[What he undertook was, to redeem our souls by his own most precious blood, and to search us out, and bring us home, and keep us in his fold, and introduce us finally to his fold

^f 1 Kings vi. 7.

^h 2 Thess. ii. 13.

^g Eph. i. 5.

ⁱ Rom. viii. 30.

above^k. The effecting of this was “the joy that was set before him;” in the prospect of which “he endured the cross and despised the shame, till he sat down triumphant at the right hand of God^l.” And when he shall behold the exaltation of his redeemed people, then will he “see the travail of his soul, and be fully satisfied” with all that he ever did or suffered for the attainment of this great object^m. Contemplate, then, the satisfaction which Christ will feel, in “*making us such pillars*,” and in “*inscribing all these characters upon us*,” (for in my text, you see it is his entire work;) and then tell me, whether the reward bestowed upon us be not, beyond all expression, great. If viewed only as a benefit conferred, it is beyond measure glorious: but if viewed as the perfection of the Redeemer’s work, it absolutely far exceeds all the powers of language to express, or of any finite comprehension to conceive.]

3. As the crown of all our labours—

[This is that reward to which all the patriarchs lookedⁿ: and for which Moses forsook all the pleasures and honours of the first nation upon earth^o. And it is by that, that all the saints, at this day, are sustained in their conflicts with sin and Satan. Whilst here on the field of battle, they have some foretastes of that glory; for *now* “have they the Spirit of adoption, to cry Abba, Father^p,” *now* do they feel themselves to have come unto Mount Zion^q, and to be “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God^r,” and *now* is “Jesus truly precious” to their souls^s. These names, I say, are already written upon their hearts by the Spirit of God; yea, and “their own names, too, are written in heaven^t.” But still they have many conflicts, as long as they continue in this world: it is not till they get to heaven that they “rest from their labours^u,” but *there* they have their happiness unmixed with any alloy of pain or sorrow; “all tears having been wiped from their eyes by God himself; and “every thing that can occasion pain having passed away for ever^x.” Was it, think you, a joy to the whole nation of Israel to see all their enemies dead upon the sea-shore? Be assured, that this is the happiness that awaits you: for as, on the one hand, “you shall never more go out” to meet your enemies, so “into that world shall nothing ever enter^y” to disturb your peace.]

^k Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 23, 24.

ⁿ Heb. xi. 13—16.

^q Heb. xii. 22.

^t Luke x. 20.

^y Rev. xxi. 27.

^l Heb. xii. 2.

^o Heb. xi. 25, 26.

^r Eph. ii. 19.

^u Rev. xiv. 13.

^m Isai. liii. 11.

^p Rom. viii. 15.

^s 1 Pet. ii. 7.

^x Rev. xxi. 4.

4. As a monument erected to the honour of God himself—

[In monuments raised to our own naval and military commanders, even in those which are erected in the temples of our God, the creature is too much lauded, and God too much forgotten: but in heaven, on every pillar is inscribed the name of God, and of Christ, and of that blessed city, the New Jerusalem, to which we belong: but *in no instance is there any record of SELF*. No; *self* is altogether forgotten there; and no praise is offered but to Him who redeemed us to God by his blood. Even the angels, who never sinned, utter not a word in commendation of themselves; but all unite in one harmonious song of praise, “to God, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.”

Now, then, conceive of the millions, more numerous than the sands upon the sea-shore, established in heaven as living and imperishable monuments of God’s power and grace: how will this very circumstance enhance the blessedness of the redeemed! To honour God below, and be witnesses for Him on earth, was no little joy: but to be such monuments in heaven, and to exhibit to all eternity the glory of that God who ordered all, and of that Saviour who accomplished all, this will be indeed the perfection of bliss, and may well determine every soul of man to live only for the attainment of it.]

And now, I ASK,

[Who amongst you will not enlist in this army? or who, having once enlisted, will not fight manfully against all his enemies? — — — Come, gird yourselves, brethren, for the combat: put on the whole armour of God: and never cease to fight in your Saviour’s strength, till he shall have crowned your efforts with victory. You well know what efforts men will make, what labours they will sustain, what privations they will submit to, and what dangers they will encounter, for a corruptible crown, some title of honour, some earthly estate, or some monumental record, that shall transmit their names to posterity; which yet they may never attain, and which, if attained, must soon perish;—and shall there be any thing for you to do or suffer in the prospect of this *sure* reward, which will be perpetuated through eternal ages? Fight ye then, I say, and “war a good warfare;” and rest assured, that, at the close of your contest, your triumph shall be complete, and this reward be accorded to you by that adorable Saviour under whom you have fought.]

MMDI.

EPISTLE TO LAODICEA.

Rev. iii. 14—16. *Unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write ; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God ; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

WHEREVER the leading truths of Christianity are maintained and professed, there may be said to be a Church of Christ. But it is too often found, that the angels or ministers of such Churches go on in the external exercise of their functions, without ever feeling the influence of the truth upon their own souls, or stimulating their people to high and heavenly attainments. Thus it was with the Church at Laodicea: the pastor and the flock had shamefully degenerated from their former experience; and were resting in a state worse than any other of the Churches in Asia; a state wherein their Lord could see nothing to approve, but every thing to condemn. Having occasion to testify against them in so severe a manner, our Lord described himself precisely in such terms as the occasion required. Being about to declare what their inward experience was, as opposed to their outward appearance and profession, he spake of himself as “the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness,” whose testimony could not be controverted or questioned: he spake of himself, also, as “the Beginning,” that is, the Efficient Cause, or Ruler and Governor^a, “of the creation of God;” who, having all things at his disposal, would with irresistible power execute all that his wisdom had decreed, and his lips had spoken. Such being his perfections, “he could not be deceived, and would not be mocked.”

In all of this *we* are interested, even as *they*; being alike bound to submit to his reproofs, and to

^a ἡ Ἀρχή.

dread his displeasure. Bearing in mind, then, what a glorious Being we have for our Judge, let us, with becoming reverence, consider,

I. His reproof of that lukewarm Church—

Hear his testimony respecting them—

[“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.” Doubtless there was amongst them “a form of godliness:” but they were altogether “destitute of its power^b.” They would so far maintain religion, as to keep up a fair character before men; but not so regard it, as to approve themselves to God. If only they “had a name to live,” it was all that they felt any concern about^c. In all the sublimer exercises of piety they were habitually and wilfully deficient. As for delight in God, and zeal for his glory, they sought not any such attainments. They had fixed for themselves a far lower standard, which required little, if any, exertion on their part; and beyond that they had no desire to advance.]

In just accordance with this was the judgment he denounced against them—

[“Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” The terms here used to express the Saviour’s indignation against them are doubtless strong, and, to our refined notions, offensive. But they declare precisely the loathing and abhorrence which such professors excite in the bosom of a holy God. In truth, if we justly viewed the sinfulness of sin, and estimated with any degree of accuracy its utter malignity, we should feel, that no terms whatever can be too strong to express its odiousness, and the abhorrence in which it must of necessity be held by God, not only when it is manifested in a way of gross excesses, but when it appears even in a way of secret defect.]

From this address to the Church of Laodicea, we shall do well to consider,

II. The instruction which it conveys to us—

We must remember, that in every epistle we are called upon to “hear,” with self-application, “what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.”

In this reproof, then, we are distinctly taught,

1. That the religion of the world is hateful to God—

^b 2 Tim. iii. 5.

^c ver. 1.

[The world, especially the more sober and thoughtful part of it, approves and applauds religion, when carried to a certain extent. But it is the external part of religion alone that commends itself to the unregenerate man. That which is really spiritual and heavenly, is rather to him an object of disgust. A carnal man will say, 'Cast not off all religion: be not "cold," and regardless of all sense of duty to your God: but, on the other hand, lay not religion too much to heart, neither be "hot" after it, as is the manner of some, who can scarcely speak or think of any thing else. Take a proper medium between these extremes, being "neither overmuch righteous," nor "overmuch wicked^d." Avoid equally what has the character of profaneness, and that excessive attention to divine things which borders on enthusiasm. Moderation is that which you must aim at; even such a moderation, as, whilst it satisfies God, will give no offence to man.' But what says God to this? O brethren! far different from this is the standard which God approves; or, rather I should say, it is the very reverse of this. Lukewarmness is that which God abhors, yea, so abhors it, that nothing can be so offensive to the stomach of a man, as that is to him. He even declares,]

2. That, in some respects, it is worse than a total want of all religion—

[Beyond all doubt, morality is in *itself* better than immorality, and an outward respect for religion better than downright impiety and profaneness. But still, when our Lord says, "I would thou wert cold or hot," he must be understood to say, that, *on the whole*, either extreme would have been preferable to the medium they had chosen. And this is true: for,

A mere formal religion is *more dishonourable to God* than open irreligion; because it is understood by all the world as intimating, that such a measure of service is, in our opinion, all that God deserves, and all that he requires; and that not even the love of God, in redeeming our souls by the blood of his dear Son, merits at our hands any better return than this. The ungodly man's life never has any such construction put upon it.

A mere formal religion, also, is *more injurious to our fellow-creatures*: for it says to every one who beholds us, This is the way to heaven: this is the precise path, in which, if you walk, you will attain salvation. An ungodly man's life conveys no such sentiment to those around him. Nobody looks to him for a pattern; and therefore nobody is deceived by him: but by the formal or hypocritical professor the world are stumbled, when they see how little good is effected by religion: and

^d Eccl. vii. 16, 17.

weak Christians are kept back from aspiring after higher attainments.

A mere formal religion is yet further *more fatal to our own souls*.—A man without any religion is open to conviction; and, if convinced of sin, will gladly accept the remedy provided for him in the Gospel: whereas a lukewarm professor is satisfied with what he has attained, and will not be persuaded that he needs any further progress.

Thus you perceive that the world and God are at issue upon this point: the world approving of no religion but that which God hates; and God approving of none but that which the world abhors. God says, “It is good to be *zealously affected* always in a good thing^e.” The world, on the contrary, says, ‘Be as zealously affected in worldly pursuits as you will; but never carry your zeal into religion: in every thing that relates to God and to your souls, *moderation* and *not zeal* must direct you.’ In confirmation of this, the world says, “*Seek* to enter in at the strait gate,” and all will be well: but God warns us to the contrary, saying, “*Strive* to enter in; for many shall *seek*, and not be able^f.” In a word, the world think it better to have no religion at all, than to be wholly under its power; and God accounts it better to have none, than such as does not engage and call into activity all the powers of the soul.]

Let me then ENTREAT you, brethren,

1. To examine the state of your souls before God—

[You find that these persons, who were so reproved, thought themselves “rich and increased with goods, and in need of nothing^g,” Beware lest ye also be led away by a similar delusion. Try yourselves, not by the world’s standard, but God’s. To what purpose will it be to be applauded by man, if God condemn? or what need you regard the judgment of man, if God approve? Look into the Scriptures, and see, Which amongst the prophets did the world approve? or which amongst the Apostles? or when did they approve even Christ himself? The zeal and piety of these were objects of offence to the world, and to none more than to the self-righteous Pharisees: and, if your religion be such as the world approves, you need no other evidence that you are yet in a state offensive to God, and fatal to your souls. God “requires *the heart^h*,” and will be satisfied with nothing less. “A divided heart” he abhorsⁱ. See to it, then, that you give up yourselves to him without reserve; and let nothing under heaven interfere with your duty to your God.

Yet let me not be mistaken, as recommending *enthusiasm*.

^e Gal. iv. 18.

^f Luke xiii. 24.

^g ver. 17.

^h Prov. xxiii. 26.

ⁱ Hos. x. 2.

No; brethren, I would be as averse to enthusiasm as any; and would cry out against it as loudly as any. Enthusiasm consists in following some conceits of our own, without duly attending to the word of God. Against *that* I would guard you, with all my might. But the world condemns all vital and experimental religion as enthusiasm: and by this device they seek to justify their own supineness. Be not ye, however, kept back by them; but, *in obedience to the written word, and in dependence upon divine grace*, endeavour to serve your God, as God himself is serving you, “with your whole hearts, and with your whole souls^k.”]

2. To consider what your feelings will be when “The True and Faithful Witness,” the Judge of quick and dead, shall call you to his tribunal—

[Will you not then wish that you had “followed the Lord fully?” Will you not then have far different sentiments about religion, from those which the Christian world at large approve? And will it not be a matter of deep regret to you, that you feared man more than God, and obeyed man rather than God? Do but conceive what your feelings will be, when the great “Author and Governor of the universe” shall execute upon you the judgment threatened, and cast you out, with the abhorrence which his word has so emphatically declared. Remember, I pray you, it is not gross sin alone that will bring this judgment upon you: no; it is *lukewarmness*: yes, though ye have been ever so observant of outward duties, if your heart have not been in them, ye are not accepted of your God. To what purpose will any man run, or strive, or fight, if he do not put forth all his strength, and exert himself to the uttermost to gain the prize? So, then, must ye “be fervent in spirit, while serving the Lord^l,” if ever ye would “receive from him the crown of righteousness which fadeth not away^m.”]

^k Jer. xxxii. 41.

^l Rom. xii. 11.

^m 2 Tim. iv. 8.

MMDII.

EPISTLE TO LAODICEA.

Rev. iii. 17, 18. *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

ONE would imagine that a person lukewarm in the concerns of religion must, of necessity, be filled with some good measure of diffidence and fear. But the very reverse of this is found true: for experience proves that self-sufficiency and self-conceit are the invariable attendants of lukewarmness: in fact, they spring out of it naturally, as fruit from the root: for lukewarmness prevents self-examination; and a want of self-examination begets security. The lukewarm person, feeling that he has within himself a sufficiency for all that he is *inclined* to do, easily persuades himself that he has also a sufficiency for all that he is *bound* to do: and under this delusion he rests satisfied with himself, without looking out for any foreign aid. Now, this is a most fatal error; and if not removed, it will deprive us of all that Christ himself has purchased for us. That I may remove it from your minds, I will shew,

I. What mistaken views this people had of their state before God—

“ They thought that they were rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing ”—

[This is the state of the Christian Church generally: I mean of that more respectable part of it which values itself on the avoiding of all extremes. Moral persons, who have a respect for religion, will readily enough acknowledge that they are not so good as they ought to be; but they have no conception of the vast extent of their depravity. Like persons possessed of earthly property, they feel a certain degree of self-congratulation, that they are “ rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing.” Their *wisdom* is sufficient to guide them in the way to heaven. Their *righteousness* is sufficient to recommend them to the Divine favour. Their *strength* is sufficient to fulfil their duties, whenever they shall address themselves to the performance of them. This was the state of man in Paradise; and they suppose it to be so still. They are unconscious that their locks are cut; and therefore, in encountering their enemies, are under no apprehension of a defeat. It is possible, indeed, that they may not express these things in words, (though the Laodiceans scrupled not to affirm it;) but it is invariably the language of their hearts: and in proof that these are the sentiments of their hearts, we may appeal to their daily experience. See whether, under a

consciousness of their great wants, they are crying to God for the relief of them: if they be not, then is it clear that they feel not the urgency of their wants, or the extent of their necessities. And if any man in the universe were to manifest the same insensibility to his earthly wants, and the same indifference about obtaining a supply of them, we should all conclude, either that he was not so poor as he professed himself to be, or that he had means of supplying his wants which were hid from us.]

But, in the midst of all this self-sufficiency, they were indeed in the most destitute condition—

[The force of the original is peculiarly strong: it marks these persons as pre-eminently to be pitied. Respecting every such deluded sinner it may be said, Here is the man most truly “wretched,” most eminently “miserable^a.” And, in truth, there is perhaps no other person in the universe so miserable as he. The man who lives in all manner of iniquity is doubtless a “wretched and miserable” being: but the man who fancies himself rich in all good, whilst he is altogether destitute, is in a worse condition than he; because he holds fast his delusions, from which the other is free; and despises the remedy, which the other may, in due season, be prevailed upon to apply.

But the grounds of this assertion are here detailed: whilst he, in his own conceit, is “in need of nothing,” he is in reality “poor, and blind, and naked.” He is “*poor*,” for, whatever he may possess of intellectual or moral good, he has no more of spiritual good than Satan himself. He has no *real* love to God; no *real* delight in him; no *real* desire after him: no *real* wish to please and honour him. Whatever he may have which may resemble these, it is but a shadow: it has no substance; it has no root; it has no real existence: and in giving himself credit for it, he only deceives his own soul. He is also “*blind*.” Whatever capacity he may have in reference to earthly things, he has no “spiritual discernment:” he has no just sense of the evil of sin, of the beauty of holiness, of the blessedness of serving God. He has no idea of the loveliness of Christ, who is said to be “altogether lovely.” In a word, he sees nothing as God sees it: and because “he *says* that he sees,” his guilt is the deeper, and his misery the more intense^b. He is “*naked*” too, having nothing to hide his deformity from the eyes of a holy God: for “all his righteousnesses are as filthy rags^c.” He may, like our first parents,

^a See the article prefixed to these two words: “That wretched one,” “That miserable one.”

^b John ix. 40, 41.

^c Isai. lxiv. 6.

attempt to cover his nakedness with fig-leaves; but they will not suffice: for "the bed is shorter than he can stretch himself on, and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in^d." This is, indeed, the state of unregenerate men, especially of those who "have the form of godliness without the power."]

But let us now fix our attention on,

II. The counsel given them by our blessed Lord—

In our blessed Lord there is a fulness treasured up for sinful man; and he invites all to come, and receive out of it according to their necessities.

Are we poor? He offers us "gold, to enrich us"—

[What is this "gold," but the grace of Christ; and especially the grace of faith, which unites us to him, and puts us into possession of all "his unsearchable riches?" *This* is gold indeed; and has, in cases without number, evinced its sterling worth, having endured the trial of the hottest furnaces which it has been in the power of man to kindle^e. See the long catalogue of saints recorded in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews; see what they thought of it; and how it enriched *them*. Moses found it amply to compensate for the loss of "all the treasures of Egypt^f;" and multitudes of others found it more effectual for their advancement than all powers in the universe could have been^g. By this the poorest man is elevated to a state of honour and happiness inconceivable; even to peace with God on earth, and to all the glory and blessedness of heaven.]

Are we naked? He offers us "white raiment to cover us"—

[This raiment is the unspotted robe of "Christ's righteousness, which shall be unto all and upon all them that believe in him^h." *This* the Lord Jesus Christ wrought out on purpose for us, by his own obedience unto death: and every soul that is clothed with that robe is so covered, that "not a spot or blemishⁱ" can be found in him; no, not by the all-seeing eye of God himself^k. It was for this very end that the Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate and died upon the cross: "He was the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth^l;" and every sinner in the universe, who trusts in Him, may claim him under that endearing name, "The Lord our righteousness^m."]

^d Isai. xxviii. 20.

^e 1 Pet. i. 7.

^f Heb. xi. 24—26.

^g Heb. xi. 33—35.

^h Rom. iii. 22.

ⁱ Eph. v. 27.

^k Numb. xxiii. 21.

^l Rom. x. 4.

^m Jer. xxiii. 6.

Are we blind? He offers us “eye-salve, to anoint our eyes, that we may see”—

[This “eye-salve” is no other than the Holy Ghost himself, whom the Lord Jesus Christ will give to all who call upon himⁿ. It is the office of the blessed Spirit of God “to open our eyes, and to turn us from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” And whoever has received “the unction of that Holy One, is enabled to discern the things of the Spirit, which before he could not see^o; yea, he is enabled, as the Scripture expresses it, to “know and understand all things^p.”]

These things, indeed, he tells us to “buy of him”—

[But what have *we* to pay? If, indeed, we are “poor, and blind, and naked,” what can we give him in return for such invaluable blessings as are here offered us? Were it required that we should present to him any thing to *merit* these blessings, we might well sit down in despair. But the terms prescribed by him are exactly suited to our state: we are to “buy of him without money and without price^q.” Not but that we are called to make some sacrifices, if we will indeed enjoy his blessings. We must give up our pride, and self-sufficiency, and self-conceit, yea, and all other “lusts, whether of the flesh or spirit,” that are hateful in his sight. In other words, we must put off the filthy rags of our own righteousness, if we would possess the unspotted robe of his righteousness; and put far from us all conceit of our own wealth and wisdom, in order to receive the full benefit of his gold and eye-salve. And who will not gladly pay this price? It is the price which the beggar pays for the alms tendered to him: he opens his mouth to ask for it, and stretches out his hands to receive it.]

And now, my brethren, I entreat you,

1. Be sensible of your wants—

[Whether ye be sensible of your need of these things or not, ye do really need them; and your misery is so much the greater, if ye think ye need them not. What would you yourselves think of a poor maniac who should fancy himself a king? Would you envy him his self-delusion? Just such deluded creatures are ye, whilst you are insensible to your real condition, as poor, and blind, and naked. Moreover, whilst ye continue under this delusion, there is no hope

ⁿ Luke xi. 13.

^p 1 John ii. 20, 27.

^o 1 Cor. ii. 9—12

^q Isai. lv. 1.

whatever of your ever receiving the blessings which Christ has so freely offered you. It was not the proud self-applauding Pharisee, but the poor self-condemning Publican, that obtained mercy of the Lord: and it is written for the admonition of all future ages, that, in like manner, "he who exalteth himself shall be abased; and he only who humbleth himself shall be exalted."

2. Comply, in all things, with the counsel given you—

[Go to *Christ* to obtain them. Think not to find them in any other: but say, "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou alone hast the words of eternal life." And be willing to receive them upon his terms. Dream not of bringing to him any thing as a compensation for them, or as a warrant for your application to him. All *your warrant* is poverty; and *your price* is your sins, which you are to *cast on him*, to be forgiven; and to *cast from you*, to be mortified and subdued. And remember *whose counsel this is*: it is the counsel of "the Faithful and True Witness," who knows all your necessities, and who alone can relieve them. It is the counsel of him who is called, "The Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God." "Listen not then to flesh and blood," nor suffer any one to make you hesitate one moment: but go to him with all your wants, and receive at his hands all the blessings of grace and glory.]

3. Enlarge your expectations to the full extent of God's promises—

[Say not in your hearts, that *this* is too great, or *that* is too small to expect at his hands. There is no greater sin than "limiting the Holy One of Israel." He bids you "open your mouth wide, that he may fill it:" and the more enlarged your expectations are, the more abundant will be his gifts. The fact is, that as there is not a want in you, for which there is not a suitable supply in him, so neither is there any thing in him which shall not be made over to you, if only ye will believe in him. Only come to receive out of his fulness, and he will give to you his grace, his peace, his righteousness, his glory. All shall be yours, the very instant that ye are Christ's." Only come to him empty, and ye shall be filled: and the more empty ye come, the more shall ye be filled, and the more will he be glorified.]

MMDIII.

EPISTLE TO LAODICEA.

Rev. iii. 19. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

IN the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia, there is an exceedingly rich variety of instruction, that is quite as applicable to us at this day as ever it was to the Church to whom it was first delivered. It is probable that some in Laodicea would regard the menace which was sent them in this epistle as a prelude to their utter destruction. They could not conceive that the Lord Jesus, who had threatened to "spue them out of his mouth" with the utmost indignation and abhorrence, could entertain, in reference to them, any other sentiment than that of irreversible displeasure: and thus they were tempted to sit down in utter despair. But our blessed Lord assured them, that these very menaces were expressions of his love and pledges of his favourable acceptance, if only they would comply with the directions which he here gave them. But the words I have read contain, not only a particular instruction to them but a truth of universal and unalterable importance to the Church in all ages. We here see,

I. How the Lord Jesus Christ acts towards the objects of his love—

God not unfrequently gives to his enemies all that their hearts can desire. Are they anxious for wealth, and honour, and power, or for an increase of their families? and do they further desire a freedom from trouble, both in life and death? All this is bestowed upon them with so bountiful a hand, that they bless themselves as the happiest and most favoured of mankind^a. Yea, to such a degree does this often obtain, that the most eminent saints are stumbled at it^b. But towards those whom he loves, he, for the

^a Ps. lxxiii. 3—5, 7, 12.

^b Job xxi. 7—13. Jer. xii. 1, 2.

most part, acts very differently : them “ he rebukes and chastens.”

1. By the declarations of his word—

[“ The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword^c.” “ yea, it is as a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces^d.” and when it comes with power to the soul, not the proudest sinner in the universe can withstand it. When but four words were written upon the wall of the room where Belshazzar was feasting, “ the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another^e!” And how it wrought upon the murderers of our Lord on the day of Pentecost, you well know : for three thousand of them cried out with one voice, “ Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Doubtless, the terror inspired by this is often exceedingly appalling : but yet it is sent in love, “ to convince men of their sin,” and to bring them to repentance : and the deeper the wound that is inflicted by it, the greater evidence there is that God has sent it in love to the soul — — —]

2. By the dispensations of his providence—

[It often happens, that men withstand the word of God, till they are visited with some afflictive providence : and not unfrequently repeated strokes of the rod are necessary, before they will hear and receive instruction from it^f. And these dispensations are thought by many to be tokens of God’s wrath. But, indeed, they are rather indications of his love : they are paternal chastisements, sent for our profit, that we may be humbled by them, and quickened, and “ made partakers of his holiness.” It was for this end that many of the Corinthian Church were^g visited with pains and sickness : “ they were chastened of the Lord, that they might not be condemned with the world^h.” And how beneficially these afflictions operate, may be seen in Ephraim of old : “ Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus : Thou hast chastised me ; and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned : for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented ; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh : I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youthⁱ.” God then adds, “ Is not Ephraim my dear son^k?” Had God felt no regard for Ephraim, he would have said, “ Why should ye be stricken

^c Heb. iv. 12.

^d Jer. xxiii. 29.

^e Dan. v. 5, 6.

^f Mic. vi. 9.

^g Heb. xii. 5—11.

^h 1 Cor. xi. 30—32.

ⁱ Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.

^k Jer. xxxi. 20.

any more? Ye will revolt more and more¹:" but, feeling towards him the affections of a Father, he says rather, "I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished^m."]]

This truth established, we may see,

II. How they in return should demean themselves towards him—

Two things in particular were blamed in the Laodicean Church, namely, lukewarmness and self-sufficiency: and against these especially he directs them to strive, by the daily exercise of zeal and penitence. The same direction is proper for all whom he has chosen in Christ Jesus to be the objects of his love:

1. Be zealous—

[It is not sufficient to perform a mere round of duties, and to abstain from gross sins. Religion is every thing, or it is nothing: it requires all the powers of the soul: and, if any of our faculties be alienated from God, or exercised only in a lukewarm way, the service, whatever it may be, will not be accepted. "In every good thing we should be zealously affected"; and "be fervent in spirit, when we serve the Lord^o." It was thus that Phinehas^p, and Elijah^q, and Paul^r, and all the saints, served God in the days of old. As for our blessed Lord "the zeal of God's house even consumed him^s." And we also ought to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works^t." Nor must it be in one thing only that we are to display our zeal. It is possible enough that in one particular line we may exert ourselves with the greatest ardour; and yet be far from having our hearts right with God. We must "have respect to all God's commandments," and serve him "without partiality, and without hypocrisy." In public and in private we must be alike earnest in all our duties: and under "the constraining influence of the love of Christ, we must live altogether unto Him who died for us, and rose again^u."]]

2. Repent—

[This is necessary for every child of man. There is no one so pure, but that he may increase in purity; nor so holy,

¹ Isai. i. 5.

^m Jer. xxx. 11. with Ps. lxxxix. 30—33.

ⁿ Gal. iv. 18.

^o Rom. xii. 11.

^p Numb. xxv. 13.

^q 1 Kings xix. 10.

^r Acts xx. 24.

^s John ii. 17.

^t Tit. ii. 14.

^u 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

but that he may grow in holiness; nor so heavenly, but that he may be more entirely devoted to his God. Of lukewarmness especially, and of the entire habit of mind connected with it, it becomes us to repent. Indeed, whatever be the sin that more easily besets us, *that* we should search out with peculiar care, and for *that* should we in an especial manner humble ourselves before God. Every day of our lives we should “be sowing in tears, if we would reap in joy.” It is not the person who occasionally feels some remorse, but “he who *goes on his way* weeping, bearing a precious *seed-basket*, and scattering *this* seed from it every step he takes; he it is that shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him^x.”]

This subject clearly teaches us,

1. What to do under the prevailing influence of corruption—

Pray to God that he would chastise you with scourges or scorpions, rather than suffer you to continue under the power of sin: and if God see fit to put you into the furnace, be more anxious to obtain the sanctifying benefits of the affliction, than to have it removed — — —]

2. What to do under the Divine rebukes—

[Receive them as the chastisements of a father, “neither despising them, nor fainting under them^y :” and take occasion from them to “humble yourselves under His mighty hand.” Whatever be your sufferings, remember that they are far “less than your iniquities deserve.” By these God designs to “purge away your iniquities^z :” and, if they are attended with this effect, you will have reason to adore him for them, more than for any exemption from trouble that could possibly be vouchsafed unto you: for so, at least, speaks an inspired Apostle: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him^a.”]

^x Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6. See the margin.

^y Prov. iii. 11, 12.

^z Isai. xxvii. 9.

^a Jam. i. 12.

MMDIV.

EPISTLE TO LAODICEA.

Rev. iii. 20. *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

OUR blessed Lord, in his sermon on the mount, says, "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Now this is exactly what we might expect of a gracious God, and more especially of an all-merciful Redeemer. But who would ever imagine that this process should be inverted; and that, instead of a sinner knocking at the door of heaven in fervent supplications, the Son of God himself should come and knock at the door of his heart, soliciting admittance there? Yet this is the representation given us in my text: so infinitely are "God's ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts." Let us contemplate this mystery: let us consider,

I. The marvellous condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ towards our sinful race—

The hearts of men are shut and barred against him—

["The strong man armed," even Satan, occupies the souls of men as his palace, and fills them with all manner of evil; and by his great power "he keeps them in peace," unconscious of their subjection to him, and altogether satisfied with their bondage^a. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes to seek admission there, every possible resistance is made to him. The lusts, which have taken possession of them, bar the door against him. Prejudice and unbelief determine them to obstruct his entrance; whilst the world, and all its lusts, maintain their post, with a steadfastness that bids defiance to every effort, save that which is omnipotent — — —]

But he "stands at the door, and knocks"—

[He comes to men in *his word*, and demands that they yield themselves up to him — — — He comes also by the secret energy of *his Spirit*; and warns men of their danger, if they persist in their rebellion against him — — — He comes also by *his providence*, to awaken them by terrors, or soften them by afflictions, if by any means he may prevail upon them to open to him — — — Year after year does he "stand," "waiting to be gracious to them," and importuning them by every kind of argument to admit him. Of Israel it is said, that "forty years he suffered their manners in the Wilderness^b." And many are the years that he has borne with us.

^a Luke xi. 21.

^b Acts xiii. 18.

The generality he finds so fast asleep, that not all the thunders of his law can waken them. Some are just roused from their slumbers: but, averse to receive him, they begin to put him off with frivolous excuses. Their language is like that of the Church of old; "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. But I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them^c?" Still, however, does he continue knocking with invincible patience: so true is that saying of the prophet, "All the day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people^d."]

What marvellous condescension is this!

[If *we* were to stand for any length of time imploring mercy from God, and were left without any answer of peace, it were nothing but what our sins have justly merited; nor could we have the smallest reason to complain. But that the Lord Jesus Christ should sue in vain for admission into our hearts, appears incredible; or, at all events, we might expect him, after the first refusal of his overtures, to say, "They are joined to idols; let them alone:" "My Spirit shall strive with them no more;" from henceforth I "give them over to their own heart's lusts, to follow their own imaginations, till they have "filled up the measure of their iniquities," and "wrath shall come upon them to the uttermost." But, "behold!" yes, well may it be said "Behold;" for His condescension exceeds belief. Do but reflect, who it is that thus waits upon us: it is the Creator, importuning his guilty and rebellious creatures: it is the Judge, following the criminal with entreaties to accept of pardon, and to let his sentence of condemnation be reversed: it is the self-sufficient God, who would be equally happy and glorious if every child of man were left to perish like the fallen angels, that labours thus to ingratiate himself with the vilest of mankind, if by any means he may prevail on some of them to accept at his hands all the blessings both of grace and glory. Say, I pray you, Is not this a condescension, that surpasses all the powers of language to express, or of imagination adequately to conceive?]

But this subject will appear more fully in its true light, if we consider,

II. The mercies which he desires to impart unto them—

^c Cant. v. 2, 3.

^d Isai. lxxv. 2. and Rom. x. 21.

These are expressed under a familiar and most significant metaphor—

[The metaphor of a guest is not uncommon in the Holy Scriptures. Our Lord said to his Disciples, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him; and we will *come unto him*, and *make our abode with him*.” And this shall be realized, in the most endearing manner, to all who open to him: “He will come in to them, and *sup* with them, and they with him.” We cannot conceive of any act of friendship that is not comprehended under this term. But how shall I convey any adequate idea of its import? What sweet manifestations of his love will he impart to the soul, and what rich communications of his grace! Who can fully explain that declaration of the Apostle, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ?” We may think of all the familiarities and endearments that ever were enjoyed, even among the most attached friends or relatives, and they will fall infinitely short of that blessedness which he will impart to the believing soul. When he comes in to sup with us, he will, if I may so say, bring his own provision along with him. What “exceeding great and precious promises” will he set before us, for our support! What tastes of his love will he give us, when he shall “shed it abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost?” And what foretastes also of his glory will he communicate, when he bids us to drink of the cup of his salvation!]

Nor is there a person under heaven excluded from this benefit—

[His own word is, “If *any* man hear.” It matters not how unworthy any man may be: if he had all the sins of Manasseh himself upon his soul, the mercy here proffered should be imparted to him. We are told of Manasseh, that he filled Jerusalem itself with the blood of innocents, and made the people worse than the heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before them: yet, when he humbled himself, God heard his supplication, and made himself known to him under the endearing character of Israel’s God^e. We may be sure, therefore, that no person under heaven shall be excluded from a participation of the grace that is here so freely offered. All that is required of any man is, to “hear the Saviour’s voice, and open to him.” O that this were duly considered by us all! Brethren, you are not called upon to *merit* any thing at the Saviour’s hands, but only to receive thankfully what he so freely offers. Only be sensible that you have hitherto excluded

^e John xiv. 23.

^f 1 John i. 3.

^g Jer. xix. 4. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 9, 12, 13.

him from your hearts, whilst you have given a ready reception to the basest lusts; be sensible, I say, of this, and now open your hearts to him, and all the blessings of salvation shall be yours, for your present comfort, and for your everlasting possession.]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are yet strangers to the Saviour's love—

[The generality of men who call themselves Christians would quite revolt at the expression in my text, and at all the wonders of love contained in it. But, brethren, wherefore is it thus with you? Is it because there is no truth in these representations? or because ye have never yet sought to experience them in your souls — — Would ye but now open your hearts to him, verily, there is not one amongst you of whom it should not be said, that "Christ is gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner^h." But if ye refuse his entreaties now, the time will come, when ye shall cry to him, but not be heardⁱ.]

2. Those who have had some experience of it in their souls—

[Be not satisfied with any measure of intercourse that you have yet enjoyed with your Lord and Saviour. Ye cannot expect, with Paul, to be caught up into the third heavens: but ye may expect from the Saviour such an abundance of grace and mercy and peace as shall be a foretaste of heaven itself. Only cast out, with increasing zeal and diligence, the lusts that have occupied your heart, sweeping from every corner of it "the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump," and your feasts with the Saviour here shall be only a prelude to that richer feast which you shall enjoy above: for all with whom he has *supped* on earth shall "sit down with him at the marriage-supper of the Lamb in heaven" for evermore^k.]

^h Luke xix. 7. ⁱ Prov. i. 24—31. Isai. lv. 6. ^k Rev. xix. 9.

MMDV.

THE VICTOR'S REWARD.

Rev. iii. 21. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

WE have seen at the close of every epistle a promise to him that overcometh. In truth, we all need

encouragement in our warfare. It is the hope of profit or of honour that produces industry among all classes of the community: it prompts the philosopher to consume the midnight oil in study; the merchant to risk his property on the tempestuous ocean; and the soldier to brave the dangers and fatigues of war. The same principle may well be extended also to spiritual concerns, and animate the Christian in the pursuits of religion. His reward indeed is infinitely greater than any which this world can afford, and may therefore justly stimulate him to the most indefatigable exertions. The utmost that the labours of man can attain on earth, is, a royal title, and a temporal kingdom; but the Christian victor has a crown of glory laid up for him, and a participation of that very kingdom, which is possessed by Christ himself. The Judge of quick and dead pledges himself to bestow this reward on all his faithful followers. His words lead us to consider,

I. The Christian's character—

Every Christian is by profession a soldier; he has enlisted under the banners of Christ; and fights till he has vanquished all the enemies of his soul—

The world is not able to detain him in bondage—

[As for the *pleasures* of the world, they have no charms for any person who knows the value of his own soul. It requires scarcely any more self-denial to renounce them, than for a philosopher to put away the toys of childhood. A regard for its *honours* is not so easily overcome. The Christian would gladly at first retain his reputation among his former acquaintance; and sometimes perhaps makes undue sacrifices rather than forfeit his good name: but when he finds how impossible it is to be faithful unto God without incurring the censure of the ungodly, he learns at last to bear “the reproach of Christ,” and to “rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake.” The *interests* of the world still subject him to many and strong temptations, even after that he has both done and suffered much for Christ; but when he has weighed both the world and his own soul in the balance of the sanctuary, he determines to forego every interest rather than endanger his eternal salvation. Thus he evinces that “he is born of God by overcoming the world^a.”]

^a 1 John iv. 4.

The flesh also gradually loses its ascendancy over him—

[Our inbred corruption is a more powerful enemy than the world, inasmuch as it is nearer to us, and ever with us. But the Christian maintains a conflict with it. He never is so perfect in this world but that he still carries about with him “a body of sin and death.” “The flesh lusts against the Spirit” to the latest hour of his life; but if any unhallowed appetite arise, he resists it to the uttermost, and will in no wise yield to its solicitations: or if it betray him into any unworthy conduct, he will mourn over it, and cry to God for grace and strength to resist it; and will never be at peace, till it is utterly mortified and subdued. A man’s besetting sin is that which will, for the most part, give him most trouble to the end of his days. Thus “through the Spirit he mortifies the deeds of the body,” and “crucifies the flesh with its affections and lusts^b.” True, crucifixion is a lingering death: but still he has nailed his besetting sin to the cross: and it shall never regain its power, though it will still continue to pour forth its venom against Christ to the latest hour of our lives.]

Nor can *the devil* with all his hosts prevail against him—

[Satan is yet a greater adversary to the Christian than even flesh and blood^c; but the good soldier will not turn his back. He “girds on the whole armour of God,” and “goes forth in the strength of the Lord God.” Satan, like Pharaoh, (of whom he was the perfect archetype) casts every impediment in his way, and multiplies his thoughts of this world, to divert his attention from a better^d. When he cannot prevail to keep the Christian from the path of duty, he will endeavour, like that hardened monarch, to limit him in the prosecution of it^e. When that fails, he will contrive, if possible, to lead him astray, and to fix his attention on controversy, or politics, or something of inferior concern. When that will not succeed, he will labour either to “puff him up with pride, and thus bring him into the condemnation of the devil;” or to cast him down with despondency, and thus cause him to desist from his purpose. But the Christian repels all his fiery darts, “resists him manfully till he makes him flee,” and finally “bruises him under his feet” as a vanquished enemy. This accords with the description given by St. John, “Young men, ye have overcome the wicked one^f.”]

^b Rom. viii. 13. Gal. v. 24.

^c Eph. vi. 12.

^d Exod. v. 6—9.

^e Exod. viii. 25, 28. and x. 11, 24.

^f 1 John ii. 13.

After having successfully maintained his conflicts, the Christian receives,

II. His reward—

As a view of the recompence that awaits us cannot fail of animating us in our warfare, it will be proper to contemplate it with care—

Our Lord declares it in terms the most glorious that can be conceived: “The Christian shall reign with him”—

[Christ is seated in heaven on a throne of glory: but he does not occupy that throne alone; he admits his victorious followers to a participation of it. Nothing less than this is deemed a sufficient reward for them. It were an unspeakably great reward, if we were only permitted to behold him upon his throne; but he assures us that we shall be exalted to sit thereon together with him, and thus to share both his honour and felicity. Such honour have all his saints; and he, as the arbiter of life and death, pledges his word, that he himself will bestow this reward upon them. How blessed then must they be! how poor a recompence would earthly kingdoms be in comparison of this!]

But the comparison which he here institutes, alone can put the promise in its true light—

[Christ was once conflicting with his enemies, just as we are; but he overcame them upon the cross, triumphed over them in his resurrection, and led them captive in his ascension; and is now set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Let us *view him then on his Father's throne, and we shall see what glory is reserved for us.* Like him, *we shall rest from our labours*: never harassed either by sin or sorrow any more. *We shall dwell in the immediate presence of him whom we love*; no longer viewing him at a distance, by the eye of faith, through the medium of the word; but beholding him face to face, seeing him as we are seen, and “knowing him as we are known.” *We shall moreover receive all the happiness of which our natures are capable.* He who was once a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief as his constant companion, now enjoys both in body and soul all the blessedness of the Godhead. In this we shall resemble him as far as any thing finite can resemble what is infinite. Our capacities of happiness will be enlarged beyond our highest conceptions, and every one will be as blessed as his capacity will admit of. Nor is Christ's exaltation merely a *pattern* of ours. He is our fore-runner; and the exaltation of the Head is a *pledge and earnest*

that all the members shall in due time be glorified together with him.]

APPLICATION—

[If such be the felicity of all Christian soldiers, who will not enlist under the banners of Jesus? Who will not join himself to the Captain of our salvation, and give up his name to be enrolled among “the worthies of our David?” Let all of you, my brethren, flock to his standard, “like doves to their windows.” Gird on your spiritual armour, and go forth to the fight. You have a Commander who can not only lead you and direct you in the battle, but can shield your heads, and heal your wounds, and strengthen your arms, and ensure you the victory. Soldiers, “quit yourselves like men; be strong.” “Fight the good fight of faith,” and trust in him for a successful issue of your conflicts. It is but a little time that you shall have to engage; and though you go forth only with a sling and a stone, Goliath shall fall before you. Only go forth in dependence upon your God, and you have nothing to fear. But O what have you not to hope for? What blessed triumphs! What glorious spoils! What everlasting shouts of victory! Look at those who have gone before you in the combat; see them on their thrones, crowned with crowns of righteousness, and shouting with shouts of triumph. Soon, very soon, shall you be numbered amongst them. Let none of you then turn your backs. “If any man turn back,” says God, “my soul shall have no pleasure in him^g.” Fight on a little longer, and you shall not only be conquerors, but “more than conquerors.” The completest victories that an earthly hero can gain, will afford him matter for weeping as well as for joy. But your victories shall be unalloyed with sorrow, and crowned with everlasting gladness. “War then a good warfare,” and fight till you overcome. So shall you receive your promised recompence, and reign with your God for ever and ever.]

^g Heb. x. 38.

MMDVI.

THE VOICE OF GOD TO HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE.

Rev. iii. 22. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

PERHAPS there is not another expression in the whole Scriptures which occurs so frequently as this. Our blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh, used it

very often at the close of his parables : and here, at the close of *every one* of the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia, did he repeat it. Surely *this* marks its peculiar importance : and, to impress it upon all your minds, I will,

I. Make some general observations arising out of it—

The first thing which strikes us, on reading these words, is, that *there must be many who have no ear to hear the word of God—*

[This is an awful truth. Whilst there are some who “will not endure sound doctrine,” there are multitudes who hear it without being at all affected with it. They even approve of it ; but still never receive it truly into their hearts. On subjects connected with their temporal welfare they would feel an interest ; but on these, which relate to eternity, they are unmoved : they are satisfied with hearing them ; and when they have given them a respectful hearing, they think they have done their duty in relation to them : “they have ears, and hear not ; they have eyes, and see not ; they have hearts, but understand not :” and, during the course of a long life, they either gain but very little insight into the great mystery of the Gospel, or acknowledge it as a mere theory, without any practical effect upon their souls.]

The next thing which forces itself upon our notice is, that *the things spoken to the primitive Churches, so far as we are in similar circumstances with them, demand precisely the same attention from us that they did from them—*

[I will grant, that, so far as the Scriptures applied solely to the particular circumstances of this or that particular Church, so far they are applicable to us only in their general tendency, or under circumstances similar to theirs. But the great mass of the inspired volume related to men as sinners, who needed mercy from God, and were bound to devote themselves altogether to God : and, consequently, it is applicable to mankind in all places, and in all ages. Many, if a passage of Scripture be urged on their attention, will say, that it was proper for the apostolic age, but inapplicable to us at this time. But men’s duty to God is the same now as ever it was ; and the way of acceptance with God is the same as ever : and therefore this objection is altogether futile, and unworthy of any serious notice. We are not to expect a new Revelation, suited to our circumstances : on the contrary, we are enjoined, at the peril of our souls, neither to add to, nor to take from, the

Revelation already given : and the command given, that every one who has an ear should hear what the Spirit has said to the Churches, shews, that not only were Christians then living to pay attention to what was spoken to their own individual Church, but that Christians, at every period of the world, should hear and obey what was spoken to the Churches generally.]

The last thing which I shall mention, as offering itself to our notice from the words before us, is, that *we can never hope to be benefited by the word we hear, unless we receive it as from God*, and as dictated by inspiration from the Holy Spirit—

[It is “the Spirit of the living God that speaketh to the Churches :” and his authority must be regarded in every part of the written word, and in all that is delivered agreeably to it by those who minister in the name of God. The hearers of the Gospel are too apt to look at *man* ; and to exalt Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, in their estimation, one above another, on account of some peculiarity in their ministrations ; forgetting, that, “whoever plants or waters, it is God alone who gives the increase.” Provided it be really agreeable to the standard of truth, the word, by whomsoever delivered, should “be received, not as the word of man, but, as it is indeed, the word of God.” And if, in attending on the ordinances, this were habitually kept in view, there can be no doubt but that the lighting down of God’s arm would be more visible amongst us, and that the Holy Ghost would accompany it with far greater power to the souls of men.]

After these brief remarks, arising out of the words of my text, I will,

II. Draw your attention to one or two things in particular, that are contained in the foregoing epistles—

The epistles to the seven Churches contain a great variety of matter, applicable to the existing state of each. In that to Laodicea, there is unqualified reprehension ; in those to Smyrna and Philadelphia, unqualified applause ; in the others, a mixture both of praise and blame. To enter into the peculiarities of those epistles would be altogether foreign to my present purpose. It is my intention to notice only the things which are spoken indiscriminately to all : and these are two :

1. "I know thy works"—

[*This* "the Spirit spake" to every one of them, without exception: and therefore we may consider it as spoken to the Church of God in all ages. And a most solemn truth it is. Almighty God inspects the ways of every child of man. He knows what we do in our unregenerate state: he knows also what we do after we become followers of the Lord Jesus. He discerns infallibly the precise *quality* of all our actions; how far they accord with the written word; from what principles they flow; for what ends they are performed. He discerns also the *measure* of them, how far they correspond with the professions we make, the obligations we acknowledge, the advantages we enjoy. He sees every thing which enters into the composition of them; how much of what is pure, and how much of what is selfish and impure. In a word, he "weigheth," not our actions only, but "our spirits;" and according to *his* estimate of them will he judge us in the last day. He will not form his judgment, in any respect, from the esteem in which we are held by our fellow-men, or from the opinion which we have formed of ourselves: he will weigh us in the unerring balance of his sanctuary, and will "judge righteous judgment" respecting every individual of mankind.]

2. "To him that overcometh will I give"—

[*This* also is repeated to every Church. And it is of infinite importance to every child of man. Every saint has a conflict to maintain, against the world, the flesh, and the devil: and he must not only fight a good fight against them, but must continue to do so, even to the end. As, in a race, it is not he who "runs well for a season," but he who finishes his course well, that wins the prize; so it is not he who wars a good warfare for a time, but he who endures to the end, that will be crowned with victory. There is to be no enemy to which we are to yield; nor any period when we are at liberty to take our ease. We are never to be weary of well-doing, never to sink under any discouragement, never to turn our back even for a moment. We must act as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and fight under his banner to the latest hour of our lives: and then may we be assured that victory, yea, and the rewards of victory too, shall be ours. "To him that overcometh," saith our Lord, "will I give to sit down with me upon my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father upon his throne."]

That these hints may produce their proper effect, I will,

III. Point out the special ends to be answered by bringing them to your remembrance—

Certainly I would wish them to be improved,

1. For your humiliation—

[I will suppose, that, like the members of all the different Churches, you profess to be faithful followers of Christ. I will also suppose that, in a good measure, you adorn your holy profession. Yet, when you remember what the heart-searching God has said, “I know thy works;” which of you has not reason to hang down his head with shame and confusion of face? If it were but a man, who had been privy to all the workings of our hearts since first we professed to serve God, we should not feel altogether easy in his presence: for though, by reason of his own imperfections, we might expect some allowances to be made in our behalf, yet the consciousness of what we were in his eyes would humble us even in our own, and would tend greatly to stop our mouths before him. Should we not, then, put our hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, before God, under the consciousness of our extreme unworthiness in his sight? Let us individually apply to ourselves that solemn admonition, “I know **THY** works.” It is addressed to us individually, as much as if we were the only individual upon earth: and God has noticed us as particularly as if there had been no other person in the universe for him to notice. I pray you, brethren, bear this in mind; and learn to walk softly before God, all the days of your life.]

2. For your warning—

[When it is said, “To him that overcometh, will I give,” it is evidently implied, that on this description of persons exclusively will any reward be conferred. Should not this, then, operate as a solemn warning to us? When any temptation presents itself to our minds, should we not consider, what will be the effect, the ultimate and everlasting effect, of our compliance with it? Should we not balance against each other, the gratifications of sense against the joys of heaven, the sufferings of sense against the pains of hell, the transitoriness of time against the duration of eternity? When persons, calling themselves our friends, would dissuade us from an entire surrender of ourselves to God, should we not bethink ourselves what they can do for us hereafter, or what recompence they can make us for the loss of heaven? Let this, then, operate on our minds, with all the weight that it deserves; and let us never forget the admonition given here to every child of man, “To him that overcometh, and to him exclusively, will I give any portion in the realms of bliss.”]

3. For your encouragement—

[See the rewards held forth to all the different Churches; and then say, whether you want encouragement to persevere? And remember who it is that says, “*I will give.*” It is no other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge of quick and dead. The world, it is true, makes promises also: but what can *it* give? If it could give you kingdoms, they were but a poor possession, which you must relinquish in a little time. And as for the mere gratifications of sense, your past experience will tell you how empty and vanishing *they* are. But, when Almighty God promises to you the glory and blessedness of heaven, *that* may well allure you; for *that* shall live for ever; and you shall live for ever to enjoy it. “Have respect then, my brethren, even as Moses had, to the recompence of the reward,” and “hold fast the rejoicing of your hope steadfast unto the end:” and doubt not but that, in due season, there shall be given you “a crown of righteousness and glory that fadeth not away.”]

MMDVII.

THE BOOK WITH SEVEN SEALS OPENED BY JESUS CHRIST.

Rev. v. 6—10. *And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he come and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

THE doctrine of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is that which sheds the brightest lustre over our most holy religion. It is his Deity which alone gives virtue to his sacrifice, and renders it a sufficient propitiation for the sins of the whole world. There are indeed many, who, whilst they profess a regard for Christianity, would rob it of its chief stay and support; and, to effect their object, will mutilate the very Scriptures themselves, and cut out of the

sacred volume what they find themselves unable to controvert or distort. But, methinks, if we were to grant for a moment that the saints *on earth* may have erred in giving to Jesus the same glory as they give unto the Father, (though their obligation to do so is, in my apprehension, as clear as the sun at noon-day,) have they also erred *in heaven*? Are the glorified saints around the throne of God under a mistake? It is undeniable that they are worshipping the Lord Jesus *precisely as they worship the Father*. Consult the chapter which precedes my text. There we are informed, that “the four beasts (the four living creatures) rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever; and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created^a.” No one, I suppose, will doubt, but that in that passage worship is given to *Jehovah the Creator of all things*, and as the one supreme God. Now compare the words of our text, and there you will find *the same persons* (the four beasts and four and twenty elders) *with the very same posture* (that of utter prostration) *in precisely similar language* adoring the Lord Jesus Christ *as their Redeemer*; and all the angels in heaven confirming this act of theirs in terms the most exalted that could possibly be used, and uniting both the Father and the Son in one song of praise, saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: therefore, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto *Him that sitteth upon the throne*, and unto *the Lamb* for ever and ever.”

^a Rev. iv. 8—11.

In opening to you this song of the redeemed, I shall bring before you,

I. The occasion of it—

This is particularly adverted to in our text—

[There was “in the hand of Him who sat upon the throne a book written both within and without, and sealed with seven seals.” To conceive of this book aright, we must bear in mind, that it was a volume, *rolled up*, and consisting of seven parts, each rolled within another, and having a distinct seal affixed to it, so that the contents of one only could be known at a time, the opening of the first making a way for the second, and the second for the third, and so on in succession throughout the whole^b. But to open the book, and loose the seals thereof, was beyond the power of any created being: there was “not one found worthy of this honour in heaven, or in earth, or under the earth^c.” On this account, the Apostle tells us, “he wept much.” He had no doubt but the contents of that book were of infinite importance to the Church and to the world, because it contained a record of God’s secret purposes respecting both the one and the other to the end of time; and it was not from the disappointment of an idle curiosity that he wept, but from an apprehension that God would be less glorified by the concealment of his purposes than by a revelation of them to his Church.

To his great joy, however, One was found, who was “worthy to open this book,” even the Lord Jesus Christ, who was here characterized as “The Lion of the tribe of Judah, and as the Root of David.” Under the former character, the Messiah had been revealed to Jacob^d; and under the latter, to David, as David’s Lord^e. But it was under a new character that he prevailed to open the book, even as “a Lamb that had been slain,” even as that Lamb of God, that having offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of men, yet bears upon his person the marks of all the cruelties and indignities that he suffered upon the cross. Yet, though bearing these marks of his humiliation, he is represented as “having seven horns, and seven eyes,” even all perfection of power and of wisdom also, of which there is none in the whole universe, that does not emanate from him: for from him proceeds the Holy Spirit, in all his diversified influences and operations, to the utmost ends of the earth^f.

This glorious Person “went to him that sat upon the throne; and took the book out of his hand,” in order to loose the seals

^b ver. 1. with Rev. vi. 1—12. and viii. 1.

^c ver. 2, 3.

^d Gen. xlix. 9, 10.

^e See Isai. xi. 10. and Ps. cx. 1.

^f The text.

thereof, and to open its contents: and immediately the living creatures and the elders burst forth into the song of praise. What occasion this circumstance afforded them for their song, will be more profitably noticed under a distinct head, after we have considered, as we now proceed to do,]

II. The song itself—

Of the living creatures and the elders, we are told, that “every one of them had harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.” There is here, beyond a doubt, a reference to the temple service. In the temple-worship harps were used in blessing and praising God^s: and, “when the priests went into the sanctuary to burn incense, all the people continued praying without^h.” Thus these worshippers, being all, as we shall see presently, made priests unto God, they had in their hands censers full of incense, through the odours of which “the prayers of the saints” ascended up with acceptance before God. Not that the glorified spirits are mediators between God and us: no, “there is but one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus;” but, as the efficacy of his intercession was typified by the incense offered by the priests, so was it further intimated in this vision, where all were executing, as it were, the priestly office, which in this very song they claimed as pertaining to them.

In the song which they sang, and which was “a new song,” they celebrated the praises of that adorable Lamb, and gave him thanks for,

1. The *work of redemption as wrought out by him*—

[Here all, without exception, to whatever nation, or kindred, or tongue, or people they belonged, traced their reconciliation with God to one common source, the atoning blood of Christ. Not one of them all presumed to claim a share in that glorious work, or to ascribe any part of it to his own strength or goodness: there was but one song amongst them all; all acknowledged equally, that they had once been slaves of sin and Satan; all confessed their obligations to Christ, for interposing for them; all referred to his blood as the price paid

^s 2 Sam. vi. 5. Ps. cxxxvii. 2.

^h Luke i. 9, 10.

for their redemption; and all with one consent joined in saying, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

Greatly were it to be wished that all self-justifying Pharisees would learn of them; and that those who look for acceptance, either in whole or in part, through any works of their own, would fix in their minds what song they will sing, if ever they shall be admitted to the realms of bliss. That they will not be able to join with those who are already before the throne, is evident; for not *any* share of the glory do *they* arrogate to themselves; they ascribe it *all* to Him who bought them with his blood: and be it known to you, that not one soul shall ever be joined to that blessed assembly, who is not like-minded with them, and has not learned already to give the entire and undivided honour of his salvation to "the Lamb that was slain."]

2. The *benefits of redemption as experienced by themselves*—

[Wonderful was the honour to which they were exalted, all being "kings and priests unto God;" "kings" to exercise dominion over all the enemies of their salvation: and "priests," to offer spiritual sacrifices before him for ever and ever.

To a yet further extension of their privileges also they express themselves as looking forward, when they add, "And we shall reign on the earth." Some have thought, that, in the Millennium, the saints will come down from heaven, and reign on earth a thousand years. But I rather understand the expressions which refer to that period, as importing, not that the departed saints will actually rise from the dead, and reign on earth, but that, so universal will be the reign of piety at that period, that it will appear as if all the departed saints had risen to dwell on earth. This is certain, that the day is coming, when "the saints shall take the kingdom," and piety shall reign as triumphantly on the face of the globe, as hitherto impiety has reigned: and, in the prospect of this, the saints in glory may well rejoice, and consider themselves as participating in the blest event!

And all these benefits, both to themselves and to the world at large, they trace to the death of Christ as the one procuring cause: "Thou wast slain," and hast brought us thereby into this happy state. To the same blessed source also must *we* trace all our privileges, and all our hopes; tasting redeeming love in all, and giving the glory of them all to "the Lamb that was slain."]

But, as it does not at first sight appear how this song could arise from the occasion that called it forth, I shall proceed to mark,

III. The connexion between the two—

Recall to mind what the occasion was. The book which was sealed with seven seals contained all the purposes of God towards his Church and people for ever and ever. And none but the Redeemer himself was found worthy to open it. But, when he took it into his hand with a view to open it, then all the redeemed burst forth into this song of praise; *expressly founding their acknowledgments on this* as their proper ground. Now this they might well do; because,

1. The events themselves recorded in that book, all arise out of his work of redemption—

[Had not the Lord Jesus Christ given himself a sacrifice for the sins of men, there would have been no difference between our fallen race and the fallen angels: all having alike transgressed, they would all have paid the penalty of transgression, and been consigned over, the one as well as the other, to irremediable and everlasting misery. But the Lord Jesus Christ having purchased to himself a peculiar people, the purposes of God respecting them are infinitely diversified, every one of them being destined to experience trials and deliverances peculiar to himself, in order to fit him for that precise measure of glory ordained for him from all eternity. Who then should open this book but He from whom it has derived its existence, and to whom all the blessings contained in it must be traced as their proper source?]

2. They will all issue in the felicity of his redeemed—

[Much indeed is spoken in that book respecting the persecutions of the saints, all of whom are said to come out of great tribulation: and can it be said that *such* dispensations minister to their happiness? I answer, yes; even in this present life, the trials to which they are subjected by their enemies, work for their good, inasmuch as they tend to the perfecting of their graces, and lead to a more abundant supply of heavenly consolations. And, in the world to come, the weight of glory assigned to each, is proportioned to what every individual sustained for his Lord, and to the fidelity with which he executed his Lord's commands. The book, like the cloud at the Red Sea, was dark on the one side, even darkness itself; whilst on the other side it was luminous as the noon-day sun: and in both respects it subserved the interests of Israel: so, whether the dispensations contained in that book be dark or light, they shall all tend to the security of the saints, and the completion of the deliverance ordained for them.]

3. They will all reflect glory on him as the Redeemer—

[We may easily conceive of this as far as the mercies are concerned: but is it true also of the judgments? Can we imagine, that the calamities inflicted on his enemies on earth, and the infinitely heavier judgments executed on them in hell, shall bring glory to the Redeemer? Look into the book of the Revelations, and you will find, that the condemnation of the wicked, no less than the salvation of the righteous, is an occasion of triumph to the hosts of heaven, and calls forth the devoutest acknowledgments and hallelujahs to Almighty Godⁱ — — —

Here then the acknowledged right of “the Lamb” to open the book, and the acclamations of his redeemed on seeing him undertake to open it, stand in the closest connexion with each other, and form one great subject, worthy of our devoutest attention.]

This book of the Church’s destinies, though opened as to the seals, is yet but very indistinctly seen by any: nor will it be fully known, till the events contained in it are fulfilled.

But,

1. Are there not some amongst us to whom the whole of revelation is yet “a sealed book?”

[It is to be feared that, notwithstanding all our advantages for knowing the great truths of revelation, they are yet but very imperfectly understood by the generality. Take the work of redemption, and interrogate the great mass of Christians respecting it, and you will find, that the grossest errors obtain in relation to it. The freeness, the fulness, the excellency of the Gospel salvation are but very imperfectly seen, and very unworthily appreciated. Dear brethren, if John “wept much,” because he could not gain an insight into the book of God’s decrees, what reason have many of you to weep, yea, to weep even floods of tears, on account of your ignorance of the Gospel of Christ, of that which “he that runs may read,” and of that on which your everlasting salvation depends. O, look to the Lamb of God to open it to you; and cease not to weep and pray, till he has revealed to you the glorious mysteries contained in it — — —]

2. Are there not, however, others to whom its blessed truths have been made known?

ⁱ Rev. xix. 1—4. Recite the whole of this.

[Yes, surely, there are not a few, “the eyes of whose understanding have been opened,” and who have been enabled to behold “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Who then amongst you are of that happy number, who can say, “Whereas I was once blind, I now see?” To you I say, Imitate the hosts above: give glory to your Lord and Saviour: shout forth his praises: sing without ceasing “to Him who has redeemed you to God by his blood, and made you kings and priests unto God and the Father.” To you also I say, Look to it that you “reign on the earth.” You are no longer “the servants either of men” or devils: “being bought with a price, you are His” who bought you, and must do *his* will, and seek *his* glory, even *his only*. None are you to fear, but Him: none to love, in comparison of him: none to serve, but in subordination to him. You are to be training now for heaven, and learning the song of the redeemed whilst yet on earth; that when the harps shall be put into your hands in the realms above, you may not strike the chords as novices, but as those who are well instructed in the heavenly science, and fully prepared to bear your part amongst the celestial choir.]

MMDVIII.

THE DOXOLOGY OF THE REDEEMED.

Rev. v. 11—13. *I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*

WE know at present but very little of the blessedness of heaven: yet the word of God enables us to form some faint conception of it. St. John draws aside the vail, and reveals to us,

I. The assembly which he saw—

The inhabitants of heaven are composed of angels, and glorified saints—

[The angels are those who "kept their first estate," from which others fell. The saints are spoken of under two characters, "the beasts, or living creatures," and "the elders." The former are *supposed* to represent the ministers of Christ^a, and the latter, the members of the Church^b: they altogether compose one body in and under Christ^c.]

Their number exceeds all computation—

[The way to heaven has always been a "strait and narrow way;" yet from the death of Abel their number has been continually increasing: their collective number is inconceivably great^d.]

The saints take the lead in the worship—

[They are represented as standing nearest to the throne^e: they begin the song^f, and the angels join in chorus^g.]

There is perfect harmony throughout the whole assembly.

II. The Object they adored—

Many deny that Christ is a proper object of worship. But he has ever been worshipped in the Church—

[Paul prayed to him, and received an answer from him^h: Stephen addressed him, as Christ himself had before addressed the Fatherⁱ: the offering of prayer to him characterizes every true Christian^k.]

And He is the object of universal adoration in heaven—

[He is the person described in the text and context^l. The description given is applicable to him alone^m.]

He is expressly joined with the Father as an equal object of worship—

[The terms used are the same, and they are addressed alike to both.]

^a In the peculiar qualities of the four living creatures an allusion is *probably* made to the talents requisite for the ministerial function. The preacher of the Gospel ought to be bold, patient, compassionate, and discerning. Rev. iv. 7.

^b They are twenty-four; probably in allusion to the twelve Patriarchs and twelve Apostles, who were the heads of the Jewish and Christian, *i. e.* of the universal Church.

^c Eph. i. 10.

^d Dan. vii. 10. Rev. vii. 9.

^e Rev. vii. 11.

^f ver. v. 9, 10.

^g ver. 11—13.

^h 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

ⁱ Acts vii. 59.

^k 1 Cor. i. 2.

^l ver. 6, 8, 9, 12.

^m John i. 29.

The worship they offer him is such as is proper to God only—

III. The adoration they offered Him—

The heavenly hosts do not offer blind and ignorant devotions: they proclaim the Redeemer's worthiness of divine honour—

[Stronger expressions of adoration are no where offered to the Father: the accumulation of words expresses the fervour of their heartsⁿ: their view of his essential glory must convince them of his worthiness; but they most admire him in his mediatorial character: the angels, though not interested as we, gladly unite their praises.]

They all join in this *unitedly*, and with a *loud voice*—

[Those from earth, and sea, &c. are the spirits of departed saints: all seem to vie with each other without one discordant voice.]

INFER—

1. How great is the privilege of the saints!

[The saints are even now joined to this blessed assembly^o: they have the same views of Christ's worthiness and glory: they are engaged in offering the same praises and adorations: they are daily growing in a meetness to join the saints above. How glorious, how desirable is this privilege! Let all seek it by faith in the Lamb that was slain.]

2. How astonishing is the folly of the unregenerate!

[This blessedness is offered to all who will believe in Christ; yet the unregenerate "make light of it." But would they think it so contemptible if they had such a vision of it as St. John had? Would they despise it if they could see the state of the damned as contrasted with it? May God convince them of their guilt and folly!]

3. How inconceivably glorious must heaven be!

[*Here* the felicity of the saints is often great^p; but *hereafter* it will transcend our utmost conceptions^q. Let

ⁿ To explain each word would destroy the energy of the whole.

^o Heb. xii. 22, 23.

^p Gen. xxviii. 17.

^q *Here*, our views are dim ("by faith") our company few, our associates polluted, our capacity small, our difficulties great, our alloy inseparable, our intermissions frequent, our declensions lamentable:

us frequently rehearse here, that we may be more fit to perform our part on the theatre of heaven.]

but *there*, we shall see Christ as he is, together with innumerable hosts, each of them shining as the sun ; our powers will be wonderfully enlarged ; we shall serve him with perfect ease and readiness ; and our bliss will be pure and unmixed, without intermission or end, yea, continually, eternally progressive.

MMDIX.

THE WORSHIP OF HEAVEN.

Rev. vii. 9—12. *After this, I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen : Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

IN the book of the Revelations of St. John there is more spoken of heaven than in all the inspired volume besides. But so greatly are the circumstances diversified, that, though the subject be ever so often brought under our review, it will always be found to wear a different aspect, and to afford fresh matter for profitable consideration. Indeed so important are those different circumstances, that we should suffer a great loss, if we did not successively fix our attention upon them as they arise. The passage before us might afford us a just occasion for entering into the subject at large ; because we behold here the worship both of the saints and angels : but we prefer noticing some particulars which distinguish this individual passage ; and for that purpose shall set before you under one head the worship of heaven, and then the instruction to be derived from it.

Let us notice, then,

I. The worship of heaven—

We behold it here,

1. As commenced by the glorified saints—

[There was of them “a multitude which no man could number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.” Previous to this period the Gospel had spread throughout all the Roman empire, and more especially if we consider the time spoken of as being after the accession of Constantine to the imperial throne, and to the Christian faith. The sealing of the hundred and forty-four thousand is supposed to refer to the peaceful state of the Church at that period. Doubtless, during the three first centuries of the Christian era, incalculable numbers of souls had embraced the faith, and been exalted to glory: and those added to all that had been found faithful to their God under the Mosaic dispensation, and to all the Lord’s “hidden ones,” whether infant or adult, in every nation under heaven from the beginning of the world, must have gradually swelled the number to a multitude countless as the sands upon the sea-shore.

These all “stood before the throne, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” Perhaps the robes, as well as the palms, were emblems of triumph: or they might denote their perfect purity, being cleansed from all their guilt in the fountain of Christ’s blood, and washed also from all defilement by the sanctifying efficacy of his Spirit. We are told this indeed in the verses immediately following our text: “Who are these that are arrayed in white robes? These are they who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb^a.” The palms in their hands proclaim them victors in the spiritual warfare. Whilst on earth, they sustained many and arduous conflicts: but they overcame their enemies, and “were more than conquerors through him who loved them.”

But do they trace in any respect their salvation either to their own strength or goodness? No, not in any degree: they all without exception ascribe their “salvation to God,” as the great Original, from whose wisdom, and goodness, and power it has proceeded; and “to the Lamb,” who purchased it for them through his own most precious blood. This is their one unvaried song: and they sing it “with a loud voice,” as glorying in a salvation so dearly bought, and so freely given.]

2. As continued by the angelic hosts—

[*The situation of the angelic hosts is worthy of particular attention: they are round about the throne indeed, as well as the redeemed; but in an exterior circle, and more remote from the common centre; for they are “round about the elders and the four beasts.” They, though spotless, have but a creature-righteousness, whilst the redeemed, though guilty, possessed*

^a ver. 13, 14.

the righteousness of the Creator himself; and therefore are counted worthy of a nearer access to him than the angels are able to attain.

Nor is *their attitude* less worthy of remark; for they, though sinless, "fell upon their faces before the throne," accounting no posture too humiliating for creatures however exalted, whilst occupied in the worship of their God.

Unable to join in the song of the redeemed as applicable to themselves who have never fallen, they yet add their hearty "Amen" to all that the redeemed have uttered, acknowledging that all possible praise is due to God and to the Lamb for such marvellous displays of their power and grace. At the same time they vie with the saints in all suitable expressions of adoration and love to their beneficent Creator; viewing with exquisite delight all the Divine perfections as visible in the works of creation, and as exhibited with yet brighter splendour in the stupendous mysteries of redemption. Every term whereby they can evince their gratitude, they accumulate, with an ardour which no words can adequately express; and then add again their "Amen," as concentrating in itself all that with the utmost efforts of their nature they are able to convey.]

Slight as is this view of the heavenly worship, it will suffice for the present occasion, if we duly attend to,

II. The instruction to be derived from it—

It will be found well calculated to teach us,

1. Our obligations—

[If we call to mind the faculties with which we are endowed, so far superior to all other creatures, and inferior to the angels alone, we shall see that we also have reason to adore our God for the blessings of our creation, as well as the angels themselves. And for the wonders of redemption, we are altogether on a par with those who are already before the throne. The same stupendous efforts have been made for us, as for them. For us was God's co-equal and co-eternal Son sent into the world, as well as for them. For us He lived, and died, and rose again, as well as for them. To us is salvation offered, as freely as ever it was for them; and for us it shall be alike effectual too, if only we embrace it as they did. The only difference between them and us is, that they are put into possession of that which is kept in reserve for us, against the time ordained of the Father for us to possess it. We have the same aid afforded to us that was effectual for them; and the very instant the work of grace is perfected in us, we shall

be summoned to the very place that is now occupied by them, and to all eternity shall unite with them in the same blessed employment of singing praises to God and to the Lamb.

We can conceive somewhat of *their* obligations: let us then in *theirs* view and acknowledge *our own* also.]

2. Our duties—

[The robes of the redeemed are emblematic of their purity, as the palms in their hands are of the victories which they gained. But how did they attain their purity? By continued applications of the blood and Spirit of Christ to their souls. And how did they gain their victories, but by fighting manfully in the strength of Christ? Behold then how we must be occupied whilst sojourning here below. We must day and night wash in the fountain that was once opened for sin and for uncleanness: our very holiest services, no less than our grossest abominations, must be purged from guilt by the blood of Christ. At the same time we must mortify the whole body of sin by the influence of the Spirit of Christ: the one labour of our life must be to grow up into the Saviour's image, and to "purify ourselves, even as he is pure." But whilst striving after these things we shall have many conflicts to maintain: we have enemies to encounter both without and within; and we must fight manfully against them all; nor ever for a moment relax our efforts, till Satan and all his hosts are for ever "bruised under our feet." It was not by mere inactive *wishes* that any of the saints in glory triumphed, but by warring a good warfare. And in like manner must we also "fight a good fight, and finish our course, and keep the faith" even to the end, if ever we would attain "the crown of righteousness that fadeth not away."]

3. Our encouragements—

[Which among the heavenly hosts did not once feel the same discouragements that we experience? But God in his tender mercy carried on and perfected his work in their souls: and he is equally willing to accomplish in us also all the good pleasure of his goodness, if we will look to him, and commit our cause into his gracious hands. He will not leave *us* or forsake *us*, any more than he forsook and abandoned *them*: and "in *our* weakness is he willing to perfect his own strength," as much as he ever did in *theirs*. There is no trial to which *we* can be subjected, that was not experienced by *them* in their day; nor was there any succour afforded to *them*, that shall not be dispensed to *us* also in the hour of need. They in their day envied those who had gone before them, as you do them: and in a little time will others arise to envy you, when your warfare shall be finished, and your blessedness be

complete. Remember that "He who sitteth on the throne" is as much interested for *you* as ever he was for *them*; and that "the Lamb" is as tender over *you* as ever he was over *them*. Only rest on a promise-keeping God, and he will never fail you. He has promised that "none shall pluck you out of his hands;" but that he will preserve you unto his "heavenly kingdom:" and "faithful is He who hath called you; who also will do it."]

MMDX.

THE FELICITY OF THE GLORIFIED SAINTS.

Rev. vii. 14—17. *These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

THE more light and knowledge God has communicated to us, the more ready shall we be to confess our ignorance, and to receive instruction from those who are qualified and appointed to teach us. Unsanctified knowledge indeed will puff us up with conceit; but that which comes from God, will lead us to God with deeper humility. The Apostle John was distinguished above all the Apostles by special tokens of his Master's favour; insomuch that he was called "the Disciple whom Jesus loved." Nor was he less distinguished by the multitude of revelations that were given to him. In the chapter before us he records a vision which he had of the heavenly world, wherein he saw all the hosts of heaven, and heard the anthems which they sang before the throne of God. Being interrogated by one of the celestial choir respecting the persons whom he had seen, Who they were? and, Whence they had come? he modestly declined offering any opinion of his own; and, in hopes of obtaining information from him, confessed

the superior intelligence of this divine messenger. The desired information was immediately imparted: he was told, in the words we have just read, *Whence they came; How they came thither; and The nature and extent of their felicity.* Taking this therefore as the distribution of our subject, we shall shew, respecting the glorified saints,

I. Whence they came—

[Perhaps the persons whom the Apostle saw, were those who had suffered martyrdom for the sake of Christ^a. But “it is through much tribulation that every one must enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Persecution indeed does not rage equally at all times, or affect all in an equal degree: but “all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer it.” It is necessary that they should endure it, not only to prove the sincerity of their faith, but to accomplish, in many other respects, the gracious purposes of God towards them. Besides, there are numberless other troubles, which are peculiar to the true Christian, and are more afflictive than the most cruel persecution. The temptations of Satan are often like fiery darts that pierce the soul, and inflame it with a deadly venom. The body of sin and death, which even the most exalted saints carry about with them to the latest hour of their lives, often drew from the Apostle tears and groans, which his bitterest enemies never could extort. He could rejoice and glory in the sufferings which *they* inflicted; but a sense of his indwelling corruptions broke his spirit, and humbled him in the dust. There is yet another source of tribulation, which, when opened, overwhelms the soul with inexpressible anguish. The hidings of God’s face were the chief ingredient of that bitter cup, which so distressed our adorable Saviour, that his “soul was sorrowful, even unto death.” Nor are any of his followers so highly privileged, but they at times cry out by reason of dereliction, and feel a grief too big for utterance. Hence then may it be said of all that are in heaven, That they came thither through much tribulation; or, as it is spoken by the prophet, That “the third part, the chosen remnant, are brought through the fire^b.”

But as they are a remnant only who partake of that glory, while by far the greater part are left to perish in their sins, it will be proper to inquire,]

II. How they came thither—

[Though tribulation is the way to heaven, and, when suffered for the sake of Christ, is the means of advancing us to

^a Rev. vi. 9—11.

^b Zech. xiii. 9.

higher degrees of glory, or, as the Apostle says, “worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” yet is it by no means meritorious in the sight of God: if our trials were ever so great, ever so long continued, and ever so patiently endured, they would not expiate our guilt, or purchase the remission of one single sin. Nor is repentance, however deep, at all more available for the removal of our guilt. As well might the Ethiopian hope to change his complexion, or the leopard to wash away his spots in water, as we to cleanse our souls from the stains they have contracted, even though we could bathe them in rivers of tears. But though neither the tears of penitence, nor the blood of martyrdom, can avail for the washing of our robes, “there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,” a fountain in which “sins of a crimson dye may be made white as snow.” The blood of the Lamb of God was shed for this very purpose, and is ever effectual for this end. And if we could ask of every saint that is in heaven, How came you hither? Whence had you this white robe? there would be but one answer from them all; all without exception would acknowledge that “their own righteousnesses were as filthy rags;” and that they “washed them white in the blood of the Lamb.” This is noticed in the text as the express reason of their being exalted to glory; they washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb; *therefore* are they before the throne of God. And, if ever we would go thither, we must go in the same way, and “be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but his.”

That we may be stirred up to seek a participation of their privileges, let us consider,]

III. The nature and extent of their felicity—

While we are in this world we can form but very inadequate conceptions of what is passing in heaven. But respecting the glorified saints the text informs us, that,

1. They serve God—

[Heaven is not a scene of inactivity, but of constant diligence in the service of God. As God dwelt visibly in the temple, and the chambers of the priests surrounded him on every side; and as the priests ministered before him in white garments, all in their courses attending upon him by day and by night, so he is represented as seated on his throne in heaven; and all his saints being made priests unto him, they surround his throne clothed in white robes, and minister unto him, not in rotation, but all together, with incessant watchfulness. They once were prevented by their infirmities, and by the very

necessities of nature, from glorifying him so continually as they would have wished; but now their powers are enlarged, and they can serve him without weariness and without distraction. Now also they have a freedom from every thing that could at all abate their happiness in his service. When they were in the flesh they had many wants yet unsupplied, and many trials that were grievous to flesh and blood. If they had lost their desire after earthly things, yet they hungered and thirsted after God, and felt many painful sensations by reason of their distance from him. But now every trial is removed: the sun of persecution no longer lights on them; nor do the fiery darts of Satan any longer wound their souls^c. Hence their *services* are *unintermitted*, and their *happiness is unalloyed*.]

2. God serves them—

[Both the Father and Christ delight to minister to their happiness. The Father has long “pitied them, as a parent pities” his dear afflicted infant; and, rejoicing with them in the termination of their trials, now “wipes the tears from their eyes,” and receives them to his everlasting embraces. The Lord Jesus too, who, though on his throne, is yet “as a Lamb that has been slain,” delights to minister unto them^d. Once, as the great Shepherd of the sheep, he sought them out, and brought them home on his shoulders rejoicing, and fed them in green pastures, and made them to lie down beside the still waters. The same office does he still execute in heaven, where his widely scattered flock are collected, as “one fold under one Shepherd^e.” There he feeds them in far richer pastures than they ever saw below, and “leads them from the streams, to the living fountains” of consolation and bliss. Incessantly does he give them brighter discoveries of all the Divine perfections as harmonizing, and as glorified, in their salvation; and incessantly does he refresh them with the sweetest tokens of his love, and the most abundant communications of his joy.]

INFER—

1. How patient should we be in all our tribulations!

[Tribulation is but the way to our Father’s house: and can we repine at the difficulties of the way, if we only consider whither it is leading us? Besides, while every trial brings us nearer to our journey’s end, it leaves one trial less to be endured. “Be patient, then, and hope to the end.”

2. How earnest should we be to obtain an interest in Christ!

^c Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

^d Luke xii. 37.

^e John x. 16

[Nothing but his blood can cleanse us from sin; nor can we ever be admitted to the marriage-supper without a wedding garment. Let us go then to the fountain; let us wash and be clean.]

3. How diligent should we be in seeking heaven!

[Will not the blessedness of heaven repay us? Will it not be time enough to rest when we get thither? Let us then press forward with all our might.]

MMDXI.

THE NEARNESS OF ETERNITY.

Rev. x. 5, 6. *The angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever that there should be time no longer.*

NEVER was there a more beautiful instance of descriptive imagery than that before us. In ver. 1, a mighty angel (probably the Angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ) is represented as coming from heaven to make known to the beloved Disciple the purposes and decrees of God. His *vesture* was a cloud, which intimated that "clouds and darkness being round about him," neither his person nor his message could be fully known. His *face* shone as the brightness of the meridian sun, which denoted his transcendent excellency and glory; while a rainbow, intimating his faithfulness to all his covenant-engagements, encircled his *head* as a royal diadem. His *feet* were as pillars of fire, marking at once his immovable firmness, and irresistible power. His *posture* was such as became his august appearance, and the solemn embassy on which he was come: he set his feet, the one on the earth, and the other on the sea, expressing thereby his sovereign dominion over the whole universe. In this situation he cried with a loud *voice*, like the roaring of a lion: upon which seven thunders, like a responsive echo, uttered their voices. The attention of the whole creation being thus deeply fixed, this glorious personage, in the manner of those who appeal to God, lifted up his

hand, and swear by him who liveth for ever and ever, even by the Creator of heaven and earth; and that which he thus solemnly affirmed with an oath, was, that there should be time no longer.

Commentators understand this oath in different ways. Some think it relates to the introduction of the millennium; others to the commencement of the eternal state. The whole period fixed for the reign of antichrist was twelve hundred and sixty years, or, in the language of prophecy, “a time, and times, and half a time:” and the oath declares, that the power of antichrist shall continue no longer than to that precise period; and that then the end of the world (as some think) or the happy state of the Church (which is the more probable opinion) shall succeed. But without entering into this question, the words, in whichever way they be understood, will furnish us with this important observation, that,

OUR TIMES ARE IN GOD’S HANDS.

That God has fixed the duration of the world itself, and the limits of every man’s existence in it, is a truth so evident, that it is needless to dwell long upon the proof of it^a. But to get it suitably impressed upon our minds, is a work of great difficulty, and worthy of our united attention. To promote this end, let the following considerations be laid to heart:

I. If God has fixed the period for our existence here,
it is impossible for us to prolong it—

[*No strength of constitution* can withstand the stroke of death^b — — — *No physician’s skill* can administer either antidote or cure^c — — — *No friends or relatives* can procure one moment’s respite^d — — — *Nor shall any want of prepa-*

^a See Job xiv. 14. and vii. 1. and xiv. 5.

^b Job xxi. 18, 23—26.

^c They are extremely useful as *God’s instruments* to effect his will: but they cannot in any instance counteract it. The monarch as well as the beggar must obey the summons of his God.

^d They may cry till their throats are dry, their eyes are bloated, and their very hearts break with sorrow; but death, that relentless messenger, will be deaf to their intreaties, and inflict the stroke on the devoted victim.

ration in us avail for the lengthening out of our appointed time^e — — — If God has said, “This night shall thy soul be required of thee,” even though we retired to our bed in perfect health, we should never behold the morning light^f.]

II. When the period fixed for our existence here shall arrive, *there will be an end of all present things*—

[All our earthly connexions will be dissolved^g — — — All our plans and purposes will be broken^h — — — All our opportunities of spiritual improvement will for ever ceaseⁱ — — —]

III. When the appointed moment shall come, *our eternal state will be irrevocably fixed*—

[There will be no change whatever in the grave^k — — — They who die without an interest in Christ will be for ever miserable^l — — — They who have improved their time for the

^e We may be living securely and without thought ; or be intending soon to reform our lives ; or be professors of religion in a backslidden state, and hoping for a season of revival ; but no regard will be paid to our unfitness for death : yea rather, that very circumstance may be God’s reason for removing us without a moment’s warning. Matt. xxiv. 48—51. 1 Thess. v. 2, 3.

^f Luke xii. 20.

^g We shall no more rejoice in the wife of our youth, or fondle in our arms our infant offspring, or enjoy the friend that is as our own soul : every social tie will be cut asunder, and every gratification of sense be taken from us.

^h If we were forming vast and comprehensive plans for our own personal benefit, or the good of the state, and had almost brought them to maturity ; if we were just on the eve of renouncing our earthly and carnal lusts in order to turn more fully unto God ; if we were in the very act of determining to read our Bible, to attend ordinances, and to devote ourselves to God ; all would be frustrated the very instant that our time was come. Ps. cxlvi. 4.

ⁱ All things are ready for us *now* : the Holy Spirit is ready to teach us, Christ to cleanse us, and the Father to accept us : ministers are ready to lead us, angels to welcome us, the oxen and fatlings to feast us, and all the promises to own us as their lawful heir. But, as soon as the last sand of our glass is fallen, all will be past and gone. There will be no more ordinances to instruct, or promises to encourage, or pastors to guide, or drawings of God’s Spirit to incline us : the fountain of Christ’s blood will be for ever closed ; the bowels of divine mercy will yearn over us no more ; nor will the angels any more tender us their friendly services. The day once ended, we can work no more for ever.

^k Eccles. ix. 10. Whatever our real character was in death, such it will remain, Rev. xxii. 11. just as Babel remained, from the instant that God confounded the languages of the builders.

^l There was an impassable gulf fixed between the rich man and Lazarus : nor was there so much as the smallest mitigation of pain

great ends and purposes of life, will be for ever happy in the presence of their God^m — — —]

REFLECTIONS—

1. This very day or night may be our last—

[Yes; if the term of our continuance on earth be now to expire, we cannot resist the Divine will; we must go: but whither? Can it be to the regions of the damned? O how shall we dwell with everlasting burningsⁿ? Is there reason to hope that we should go to heaven? then welcome sickness! welcome death! But let us not rest one moment while this awful matter is in suspense.]

2. Our last day must come soon, at all events—

[What if we live fifty or sixty years! the time will soon be gone, as a weaver's shuttle passing through the loom^o; and then the thread of life will be cut. They who are now advanced in years look back upon their past life as a dream. So will it appear to us also, when it is spent. Let us then work while it is day; and before the night comes, in which no man can work^p.]

3. The present moment is of infinite importance to us all—

[It is all that we can call our own: and on this eternity depends. Let us therefore live as those who live for eternity^q. If ever we should be with Christ in Paradise, shall we regret that we took so much pains to get thither? If, on the contrary, we should ever lift up our eyes in hell, shall we not bewail the supineness that brought us thither? Let us then awake from our slumbers; and labour, that, at whatever time our Lord may come, he may find us watching^r.]

allowed to him that was in hell. Luke xvi. 26. Rev. xiv. 10, 11. As on Noah's entrance into the ark the door was shut; so there will remain no possibility of admission into heaven, if once we die without an interest in Christ.

^m They shall be as pillars in the temple of their God, and shall go no more out. Rev. iii. 12. and iv. 8. and vii. 15.

ⁿ Isai. xxxiii. 14.

^o Job vii. 6.

^p John ix. 4.

^q 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

^r Much of the foregoing matter would serve to illustrate ANOTHER TEXT, Jer. xxviii. 16. *This year thou shalt die.* It might be treated thus: 1. What prospect there is that the text will be fulfilled in us—(Many will die this year—No one has any security that he himself shall not be among the number—We all feel in ourselves the seeds of death—Many who in all respects were as likely to live as we, are dead already—There is a year coming wherein every one of us *must* die.) 2. What effect that prospect should have upon us—(It should make us, dead to the world—serious in self-examination—diligent in working out our salvation.)

MMDXII.

THE REIGN OF CHRIST ON EARTH.

Rev. xi. 15—17. *And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.*

WE read of our blessed Lord weeping over Jerusalem, in the contemplation of the guilt they had contracted by their misimprovement of his mercies, and the heavy judgments which were about to be inflicted on them. And, in truth, wherever we turn our eyes, whether towards the heathen or the Christian world, we see but too just occasion to weep over their unhappy state. It is almost impossible to behold the universal reign of sin and Satan, and not to participate the feelings of David, when he said, “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law^a.” But it will not be always thus. There is a time coming, and, we hope, now near at hand, when the whole world shall be converted to the faith of Christ, and “the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.” Of this period the Apostle speaks in my text. Respecting the sounding of the seven angels I forbear to speak, because of the obscurity in which the subject is involved. But of the universal establishment of the Redeemer’s empire, and of the joy expressed amongst the heavenly hosts at the prospect of it, I may speak with certainty; because it is a subject so fully opened in the sacred writings, that we can entertain no doubt respecting it.

Let me then call your attention to,

I. The approaching reign of Christ on earth—

^a Ps. cxix. 136.

The kingdoms of this world have hitherto been almost entirely under the dominion of the prince of darkness—

[Satan is called “the god of this world,” because he has reduced the world to a state of entire subjection to himself. That wicked fiend beguiled our first parents in Paradise, and brought under his own tyrannic sway the whole of the human race. The effect produced by him on his vassals may be seen in the first-born child of man; who was a murderer, and slew his own brother solely from an envious hatred of his superior piety. Some few, a little remnant, God has in every age delivered from his dominion; but, from the fall of Adam to the present hour, he has kept in bondage the great mass of mankind, and is therefore justly called “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in all the children of disobedience.” Not that he has power to make men act contrary to their will. They are possessed of a corrupt nature; and he knows how to take advantage of their evil propensities, and to ensnare them with temptations suited to their corrupt appetites. His wiles and devices are inconceivably subtle: the spirits also that are confederate with him are innumerable: and men are but too willing to comply with his solicitations: so that he takes them in his snares, and “leads them captive at his will.” He does not indeed impel every one to the same crimes. Some he instigates to fulfil the desires of the flesh; others to tread more nearly in his own steps, by gratifying the desires of the mind in the indulgence of pride, envy, malice, and other hateful passions; which are no less odious in the sight of God, than those lusts which assimilate us rather to the beasts. But, whatever diversity there may be in the outward conduct of mankind, all agree in this, they cast off the yoke of God, and walk after the imagination of their own evil hearts — — —

Such is the state of all the kingdoms of this world, as well of those which enjoy the light of revelation as those that are yet immersed in Pagan darkness.]

But they will in due season “become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ”—

[The prophets have fully declared this: “The God of heaven will set up a kingdom,” which shall not, like the kingdoms of this world, be destroyed, but shall be universal in its extent, and everlasting in its duration^b. To “the Son of man,” the Lord Jesus Christ, shall this be committed; and “all people, nations, and languages shall serve him^c,” “all

^b Dan. ii. 44.

^c Dan. vii. 13, 14.

kings shall fall down before him," and "his enemies shall lick the dust." Not that he will interfere with the exercise of kingly power amongst the different potentates of the earth: for "his kingdom is not of this world:" the seat of his empire is the heart: and there will he establish his throne; not by the sword of man, but by "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Of what kind his dominion will be, we may form some judgment from what took place on the day of Pentecost. His word on that day was "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," and thousands instantly fell before it. So, when the time shall have come for the full establishment of his kingdom, all opposition, whether of men or devils, shall fall, as Dagon before the ark, and "all nations shall be subdued to the obedience of faith." Then where sin and Satan have hitherto maintained an undisputed sway, the grace of God shall reign, and iniquity from thenceforth shall hide its face — — —]

No sooner was this glorious event announced, than all the hosts of heaven were moved to welcome it. Their thanksgivings will lead me to set before you,

II. The joy expressed in heaven at the prospect of it—

Verily, the reign of Christ is a ground of joy, and may well be made so by all on earth, and by all in heaven. Consider the effect of it,

1. As it respects the honour of God—

[God is banished, if I may so say, from the very world which he has made; and the whole of the human race are up in arms against him. His authority is altogether despised. Let any one attempt to impress on men the obedience which they owe to God, how will he be regarded? What will he meet with from every quarter but ridicule and contempt? I speak not of the liberty which by courtesy is allowed to ministers in the discharge of their public duty, but of expostulations or entreaties in social life: and who is there that knows not how such a liberty would be resented? Nor would it give offence only amongst the profligate and abandoned, but amongst the more moral and decent part of the community: nothing more need be done than to exalt God's law as the rule of our conduct, and his authority as paramount to every other consideration, and it will soon be seen how entirely all subjection to him is cast off, and man is become a god unto himself. The same effect will be produced if we speak of the love and mercy

of our God. Let us declare to those around us what God has done for the redemption of a ruined world; let us invite them to believe in Christ, to apply to him for the gift of his Holy Spirit, to live in the continual exercise of prayer and praise; shall we be a whit more acceptable to carnal men, than when calling them to submit to the commands of God? No: the language of their hearts is, There is "no God" to controul us^d; or, if there be, we will not submit to him: "We know not the Lord, neither will we obey his voice^e." And as for his Son, whom you represent as sent to gather in the fruits of his inheritance, "let us cast him out," and live in the undisturbed enjoyment of our own hearts' lusts.

Now who that considers this must not blush, and be confounded for the indignities which are cast upon his God? How can we reflect upon it a moment, and not wonder, that the whole earth is not swallowed up again with an universal deluge, or burnt up with fire as Sodom and Gomorrhah?

But it is delightful to know, that a period is coming, when "God will take to him his great power and reign," from one end of the earth even to the other. In this contemplation our minds find some relief. Our God shall not always be thus dishonoured: his authority shall one day be universally acknowledged, and his will be universally obeyed. The mysteries of his love also shall be duly appreciated, and all the wonders of his grace be extolled on earth even as they are in heaven. Well might the four and twenty elders, the representatives of the whole body of the redeemed, "fall down and worship God" in the prospect of this time, "saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned."]

2. As it respects the happiness of man—

[Were we to look only to the *temporal* happiness of man, we shall find it greatly enhanced by the diffusion of true religion in the world. For partly through the calamities to which we are unavoidably exposed, and partly through the evils which men, through the influence of their evil passions, inflict upon each other, this world is, more or less, to every man, a vale of tears. But religion induces such habits of mind as to dispose us to an universal exercise of love; whilst it affords such consolations as turn afflictions themselves into occasions of joy. In reference to individuals, it may be said, that "instead of the thorn grows up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier grows up the myrtle-tree^f;" and, in reference to communities, that the wolf is made to dwell with the lamb, and

^d Ps. xiv. 1.

^e Exod. v. 2. Job xxi. 14, 15.

^f Isai. lvi. 13.

the leopard to lie down with the kid; nor will there be any to hurt or to destroy in all God's holy mountain^g.

Great as the change is in this respect, it is far more glorious in a *spiritual* view. Where is the man who knows any thing of solid peace? He does not exist upon the face of the whole earth, except among the little remnant of God's peculiar people. Many possess what they *call* peace, that is, a mere thoughtlessness and indifference about the eternal world: but who derives joy from the contemplation of death and judgment? Who is "looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of Christ," as the period for the completion and consummation of his bliss? Or who finds a real delight in God as his reconciled God and Father? This is the portion of those only who have believed in Christ. They do possess it: they walk with God as dear children: they maintain sweet fellowship with the Father and the Son: they live as on the borders of eternity, and enjoy already a foretaste of their heavenly inheritance. Of this indeed none can judge, but those who experience it in their souls: there is "a stone given to them with a new name upon it which they alone can read^h:" but though the stranger intermeddled not with their joy, it is real, "unspeakable, and glorified."

For the full effect of the reign of Christ we must wait till we come into the *eternal* world. We must be added to the heavenly hosts before we can at all conceive of their bliss: but when exalted to a participation of their lot, we shall feel precisely as they do; and "fall on our faces before the throne of God," to adore him with all the blended emotions of humility and love. Where Christ is not known, the very superstitions of men impose on them such a yoke as makes life itself a burthen: but, wherever he reigns, "the wilderness blossoms as the rose," and earth becomes a nursery for heaven.]

Let me now, in conclusion, ADDRESS myself,

1. To those in whose hearts the kingdom of Christ has been established—

[Mark, I pray you, the conduct of those in heaven. In the prospect of this glorious period, they, not on their own account, but on account of those who should hereafter participate their bliss, *rose from their thrones whereon they were seated*, and all with one accord *fell upon their faces* before God, the very instant that the glad tidings were proclaimed, and burst forth into the devoutest praises and thanksgivings to him on account of the blessings which were about to flow down on man, and the honour which would thereby accrue to God. And will not *you* prostrate yourselves before him;

^g Isai. xi. 6—9.

^h Rev. ii. 17.

you who are so deeply interested in this event, and who have through the sovereign grace of God been already made partakers of the benefit? I charge you, brethren, to cultivate this very spirit. This is what I wish to see in all the religious world: this is the true and proper effect of redeeming love upon the soul: and I call upon you all to make this improvement of it, and to grow downward in humility, whilst you bring forth fruit upward to the praise and glory of your God.]

2. To those who have never yet bowed to the sceptre of his grace—

[Do you not know that this revolution which is to take place in the world at large, must take place in the heart of every individual; and that, till it is experienced by you, you are subjects and vassals of the prince of darkness? Know of a surety, that, if ever you would be acknowledged by Christ as his redeemed people, you must be “turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Yes indeed; you must submit to Christ; you must bow to the sceptre of his grace, or be “broken in pieces as a potter’s vessel.” Remember what he has said respecting those who reject “his light and easy yoke;” “Bring hither those that were mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me.” My dear brethren, cast away the weapons of your rebellion ere it be too late; and yield a willing obedience to your Saviour now, that you may reign with him in glory for ever and ever.]

MMDXIII.

HOW SATAN IS TO BE VANQUISHED.

Rev. xii. 11. *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.*

THE establishment of Christianity, whether in the world at large, or in the souls of individuals, is, by means of a warfare, carried on between “the god of this world,” and the God of heaven and earth. Such is the representation given of it in our text. “There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast

out into the earth: and his angels were cast out with him^a." By this I understand, that whilst our blessed Lord sought, by means of faithful ministers and active saints, to establish his kingdom upon earth, the devil, through the agency of persecuting emperors, and idolatrous priests, and heathen philosophers, laboured to the uttermost to counteract this gracious design. During the three first centuries the conflict was severe: but at last the Lord Jesus prevailed, so that Christianity, under Constantine, became established through the Roman empire, and idolatry was in a great measure destroyed. "Then was heard in heaven a loud voice, saying, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night: and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death;" that is, this victory was gained, not by the sword, but by the faith of believers, the fidelity of ministers, and the constancy of all.

The words which we have taken for our consideration at this time belong more particularly to believers, who maintained their steadfastness, and were useful in the diffusion of the truth, by the simple exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were accused before magistrates continually, through the influence of Satan; but "they overcame their great adversary by the blood of the Lamb."

Let us consider—

I. The character of the adversary with whom we have to contend—

He is called "the accuser of the brethren:" and this name justly belongs to him at the present day: for he accuses all the Lord's people,

1. To God himself—

^a ver. 7—9.

[We are told how repeatedly and how confidently he accused Job^b: and that, "when Joshua the high-priest stood before the angel of the Lord, Satan stood at his right hand to resist him^c." To the same effect, in the words immediately before our text, it is said, "He accused the saints before God day and night." How far that wicked fiend may be permitted to prosecute his impious course in the presence of the Most High, we will not undertake to say: but whatever efforts he made in former days, he uses still: and by whatever means he sought to injure the saints of old, he still has recourse to them for the purpose of effecting his murderous designs.]

2. To their fellow-men—

[Here we can speak without hesitation. We see how this deceiver accused God's people of old, to Artaxerxes, to prevent the re-building of the temple^d; and to Ahasuerus, in order to effect their utter destruction^e. In like manner he accused the Apostles as ring-leaders of sedition; and even our Lord himself as a blasphemer and a demoniac. And what is there that he does not lay to the charge of the saints at this day? Through him they are still, exactly as they were in the apostolic age, "a sect that is every where spoken against^f." Our blessed Lord taught us to expect that men would "speak all manner of evil against his followers falsely for his sake^g:" and so it is, and so it will be, as long as "the accuser of the brethren" retains his influence in the world.]

3. To themselves—

[Few, if any, of the Lord's people are altogether strangers to the wiles of Satan. Exceeding powerful are the suggestions, whereby he tempts and harasses the souls of men. They are justly compared to "fiery darts," which penetrate the inmost soul, and which nothing but "the shield of faith can quench^h." Sometimes he insinuates that we have committed the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost; and that we can *therefore* never be forgiven. At other times he suggests, that we are not of the number of God's elect; and that, consequently, it is in vain to seek his face. At other times, he would make us believe, that we have sinned away our day of grace; and that therefore our state is remediless and hopeless. Now though the world at large are "ignorant of these devices," the Lord's people know them by bitter experienceⁱ; and find, that, whilst this subtle enemy, by accusing them to others, creates to them many "fightings without," so

^b Job i. 9—11. and ii. 4, 5.

^d Ezra iv. 12—16.

^g Matt. v. 11.

^e Esther iii. 8, 9.

^h Eph. vi. 16.

^c Zech. iii. 1, 2.

^f Acts xxviii. 22.

ⁱ 2 Cor. ii. 11.

by accusing them to themselves he generates many "fears within^k."

But, formidable as this enemy is, my text informs us,

II. By what means we may be sure to overcome him—

Of the saints in glory we are told, that "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb:" and we in like manner shall overcome him also, if we regard the blood of the Lamb,

1. As the ground of our hopes—

[It is "the blood of the Lamb" which has procured our reconciliation with God: and if we be sprinkled with it, as the houses of the Israelites were sprinkled with the blood of the Paschal Lamb, no enemy whatever can prevail to hurt us. Thousands may fall beside us, and ten thousands at our right hand, but destruction can never come nigh us. There is in that precious blood a sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world; so that, if we had the sins of the whole world upon our own souls alone, we need not despair: we need only to plunge into "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," and we shall be pure, even as an angel is pure: "our sins of scarlet or of crimson dye shall instantly become as wool, yea, and as white as snow itself." In vain will Satan then attempt to accuse us: for God, who seeth our secret reliance on the blood of Christ, will "behold no iniquity in us:" and in vain will he attempt to distress our minds; for, "being justified by faith in that blood, we shall have peace with God," and peace in our own conscience. That plea, the death of Christ for us, will be sufficient to silence every accusation, and to defeat every assault of our great adversary.]

2. As the source of our strength—

[That precious blood has purchased for us all the blessings both of grace and glory; and relying on it, we may be assured that "our strength shall be according to our day." What is there that God will not do for those who are reconciled to him through the sacrifice of his dear Son? Will he not come down to them, and dwell in them, and be a Father unto them; and deal with them as sons? But there is one promise which comprehends within it every thing that our hearts can wish: "I will be a God unto them^l." Consider what is implied in this. If it had been said only, I will be a friend, or a father unto them, it would have been most encouraging; because it

^k 2 Cor. vii. 5.

^l Heb. viii. 10.

would have secured to us all that might reasonably be expected from persons standing in such relations to us. But, when it is said, "I will be a God unto them," it secures to us the exercise of infinite wisdom, and almighty power, and goodness, and love: and with these on our side, we may defy all the assaults whether of men or devils.]

3. As a stimulus to our exertions—

[Sweetly encouraging was the testimony given to Abel, when he offered a firstling of his flock to God; insomuch that Cain, who understood its import, was filled with rage at the distinguishing grace shewn to his pious and believing brother^m. But the blood of Christ sprinkled on our souls "speaks infinitely better things to usⁿ." And shall not his love in shedding it for us influence our minds? Shall it not "constrain us to live unto him who died for us and rose again^o?" What will be able to stop us when impelled by gratitude to him? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No: in all those things we shall be more than conquerors through him that loved us^p." None of these things will move us: we shall "be ready not only to be bound, but also to die," for our adorable Benefactor; and shall never cease to fight against our adversary till he is overcome, and "bruised under our feet."]

APPLICATION—

Seeing then that our victory over this great adversary is to be gained by the blood of the Lamb, let us exercise faith in that blood,

1. With simplicity—

[This is the precise idea contained in our text. The redeemed overcame by a simple reliance on the blood of Christ as the only ground of their hopes. And in this we must resemble them. We must not blend any thing else with this. We must not endure the thought of uniting any work of ours in any degree whatever with Christ's meritorious death and passion. We must make Him our only foundation, and glory in him alone — — —]

2. With boldness—

[It is added, that they overcame Satan by the word of their testimony. No doubt they all testified of Christ wherever they went: and by their testimony they prevailed on thousands to embrace the faith, and to burst the bonds in which

^m Gen. iv. 4, 5.

^o 2 Cor. v. 14.

ⁿ Heb. xii. 24.

^p Rom. viii. 35, 36.

they had been held. You are not all, it is true, called to be ministers of Christ, but you are all to be witnesses for him in the midst of a dark benighted world. With the heart you may believe unto righteousness; but with the mouth you must make confession unto salvation. By this you will give the death-wound to Satan: for let light only shine, and the kingdom of darkness will be utterly destroyed — — —]

3. With constancy—

[To the honour of the saints in glory it is recorded, that “they loved not their lives unto the death.” This is the sure way to conquer. Jesus himself, “by death overcame him that had the power of death, that is, the devil:” and in the same way must we triumph also. If we would vanquish Satan in the world, or in our own hearts, it must be by shewing that death has no sting for us; and that we can welcome it for Christ’s sake. “Be ye then faithful unto death, and Christ will give you the crown of life” — — —]

MMDXIV.

THE LAMB SLAIN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.

Rev. xiii. 8. *Whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

THE persons here spoken of are the saints, who have withstood, and are still withstanding, the corruptions of Popery, even unto martyrdom itself. There can be no doubt but that the Papal power is that which is here portrayed as exercising the most relentless tyranny over the Christian world, during the space of twelve hundred and sixty years. The multitudes that have been slain by that blaspheming and persecuting power are innumerable. For hundreds of years, that idolatrous Church, aided by the secular arm of its advocates and dependants, compelled all to “worship her;” those only excepted, “whose names had been written in the Lamb’s book of life from the foundation of the world.” Over these she could not prevail, because “they loved not their lives unto the death:” but over all others she exercised the most despotic sway; and reduced them to a state of vassalage, more cruel and debasing than could ever have been contemplated, or even credited,

if the voice of inspiration had not declared it, and the history of ages borne witness to it.

It is not however of Popery that I am about to speak, nor of those who are delivered from it; but rather of that *electing and redeeming love* by which they have been delivered, "their names having been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Let us consider these remarkable expressions: and let us mark,

I. The designation here given to our blessed Lord—

He is called "a Lamb," because he was destined to be a sacrifice for sin, like the lambs that were offered under the Mosaic law. And though he did not come into the world till the world had existed four thousand years, yet is he said to have been "slain from the foundation of the world." And justly may he be spoken of under these terms: because, though not slain, *in fact*, till about thirty-four years after his incarnation, he was offered in sacrifice to God from the very beginning,

1. In purpose—

[From all eternity was he devoted to God; and set apart for an offering, just as the Paschal Lamb was four days before it was actually slain. In all *the prophecies*, this was clearly shewn. The very first promise that was given to man declared, that, in his conflicts with the powers of darkness, he himself should suffer, having "his heel bruised, whilst he bruised the serpent's head;" and "dying himself, whilst he overcame him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." In the Psalms of David, all the circumstances of his death were predicted with a minuteness that bore the resemblance of historic record, rather than of a prophecy of what was afterwards to be accomplished. The Prophet Isaiah also, eight hundred years before the Saviour's advent, was equally particular in his predictions respecting him; so that it is not possible to read his prophecies with candour, and retain a doubt of whom he spake, or whose sufferings he foretold. At last the forerunner of our Lord pointed him out, as the very person so characterized and so predicted; saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world!"

The types, also, bear the same testimony to Him from the beginning. There can be no doubt but that sacrifices were of

divine appointment: for when Abel took of the firstlings of his flock to offer to the Lord, he did it "by faith." "Now *faith* must, of necessity, have respect to a divine ordinance. If God had not previously ordained the offering of sacrifices, it would have been an act of *presumption*, and not of *faith*, in Abel so to approach the Deity. We are not, indeed, told *when* God instituted the use of sacrifices; but we conceive it to have been immediately after the fall, when he clothed our first parents with the skins of beasts, which, I think there can be no doubt, had been offered in sacrifice to him, by his own express appointment. In every successive age, the same sacrifices were offered by Noah and the Patriarchs, till the time of Moses, when they were made the constant means of shadowing forth the Saviour, and of making known unto men the only way in which a sinner could find acceptance with God. They all shadowed forth the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Sacrifice that was in due time to be offered for the sins of the whole world.]

2. In effect—

[As God had ordained from all eternity the sacrifice of his dear Son, so he regarded it as if it had been actually offered; and imputed the merit of it to all who approached him in humility and faith. Doubtless our first parents, and Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and the Patriarchs, and all the saints that were saved during the first four thousand years, were "accepted in the Beloved," just as we are since his advent and crucifixion. "They all died in the faith" of Him who *was to come*, as we die in the faith of Him who *is already come*^a. There has been but one way of salvation from the beginning. The Lord Jesus Christ ever was, and ever will be, "the way unto the Father; and no man ever did, or ever will, come unto the Father but by Him"^b. It is in consequence of the reflex efficacy of his sacrifice, so to speak, that God's righteousness appears in the remission of sins before his advent, no less than in the forgiveness of them since his advent. "God having from the beginning set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, his righteousness in the remission of sins was, as St. Paul tells us, fully declared from the beginning, precisely as it is at this very hour"^c.]

Whilst we look thus to the death of Christ as the meritorious ground of our acceptance with God, we must trace altogether to the electing love of God,

II. The security of those who believe in him—

There is "a book," in which the names of all

^a Heb. xi. 13.

^b John xiv. 6.

^c Rom. iii. 25, 26.

God's people are registered, and have been registered "from the foundation of the world^d." This book is called "The Lamb's book of life^e"—

[“There is, and ever has been, a remnant according to the election of grace^f.” These were given by the Father to the Lord Jesus Christ^g, that they might be a peculiar people to him, and that in them “he might see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.” They were “chosen by the Father,” and “predestinated” unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, that they might be to the praise of the glory of his grace, who has made them accepted in the Beloved^h.” In due time “they are called by God with an holy calling; but still, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world beganⁱ.”]

All who are inscribed in this book shall surely attain eternal life—

[This is clearly intimated in my text, as the source of steadfastness to those who had not worshipped the beast: but in many other places it is directly affirmed; yea, and the veracity of God is pledged for the performance of the promise which such an inscription implies. Remarkable is that expression of St. Paul to Titus, when, speaking of himself, he says, “In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began^k.” Here he not only traces up the promise of life altogether to the sovereign grace of God, but represents the veracity of God as pledged for the accomplishment of it. In another place he sets forth the promise of God as “confirmed by an oath, in order to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, and to give the stronger consolation to those who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them^l. In fact, there is a golden chain of Divine purposes, reaching from eternity to eternity: “for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son: and whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified^m.” In fact, God upholds all his people in his arms, and “suffers none to pluck them out of his handsⁿ,” and “keeps them, by his own power,

^d The last clause of the text may, with equal propriety, be connected with “The Book Written,” or “The Lamb Slain.”

^e Rev. xxi. 27.

^f Rom. xi. 5.

^g This is again, and again, and again mentioned in Christ's intercessory prayer: John xvii.

^h Eph. i. 4—6.

ⁱ 2 Tim. i. 9.

^k Tit. i. 2.

^l Heb. vi. 17, 18.

^m Rom. viii. 29, 30.

ⁿ John x. 28, 29.

through faith unto salvation^o." "The same hand that has laid the foundation of grace in their souls, will also finish the structure^p;" and "He who has been the author of good to them, will also be the finisher^q."]

LEARN then, from hence,

How greatly we are indebted to our God—

[If we are saints indeed, "our names are written in the book of life^r," and have been "written in it from the foundation of the world^s." What ground, then, is there to any one for self-applause? We acknowledge that there is a difference between you and others; and you are not serving the world, and the flesh, and the devil, as millions of your fellow-creatures are. But who made you to differ? What had you done, to deserve the distinction of having your names written in the book of life? The change that has taken place in you was not the *source*, but the *fruit* and *consequence* of that mercy which God, of his own sovereign grace, conferred upon you. Rejoice, then, in that inestimable benefit, and in that God who so freely bestowed it on you. There is nothing under heaven that calls for so much gratitude at your hands^t: and therefore I call upon you to bless and magnify your God with your whole hearts.]

2. What reason we all have for humiliation and contrition—

[I will not speak of any gross sin as committed by us: I will notice only our ingratitude to God for his electing and redeeming love. Think of the Saviour setting himself apart from all eternity to be slain for you. Think of God the Father setting his love upon you from all eternity, and writing your unworthy name in the book of life. And then think what provocation you have given him "to blot it out again^u:" and yet he has borne with you to the present moment, in order that you might not come short of the glory reserved for you. Say, whether, in the review of these things, you ought not to stand amazed; yea, and to blush and be confounded in the presence of your God? Verily, it is not possible for us ever to lie too low before our God: and to all eternity must we fall on our faces before the throne, whilst, with all the glorified saints and angels, we unite in singing praises to God and to the Lamb.]

^o 1 Pet. i. 5.

^p Zech. iv. 9.

^q Heb. xii. 2.

^r Phil. iv. 3.

^s Rev. xvii. 8.

^t Luke x. 20.

^u Rev. iii. 5.

MMDXV.

THE FELICITY OF HEAVEN.

Rev. xiv. 1—5. *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

A CONSIDERABLE part of the Book of Revelation is yet involved in impenetrable obscurity; though we doubt not but that, when the predictions contained in it shall have been fulfilled, the whole will appear as lucid and intelligible as any other prophecies which have been already accomplished. There are parts however which may be understood by every reader; and which are particularly interesting, on account of the sublime views which they unfold to us of the heavenly state. Indeed in the whole of the inspired volume there will not be found such bright displays of heaven as in this closing part of the sacred canon. The vail seems on many occasions to be drawn aside, as it were, and we are admitted to see and hear all that is taking place in the regions of bliss. The passage before us is of this kind. The Apostle himself was, as it were, caught up into the third heavens, where he saw his adorable Lord and Saviour in the midst of all his redeemed people, and heard the songs with which they proclaimed his praise. His record concerning it will lead me to set before you,

I. The blessedness of heaven—

There the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in the midst of his redeemed people—

[Heaven doubtless was the place now opened in vision to the Apostle's view: it was "Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem^a,"

There the Lord Jesus Christ dwells, still retaining in his person all those marks which his murderous enemies inflicted on his sacred body, when he offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of a ruined world. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and in that sublime character does he yet appear, though seated on his heavenly throne: for in that character he is most glorified in himself, and most endeared to his redeemed people.

Around him stand the myriads of his redeemed. They are called "an hundred and forty and four thousand," every tribe of Israel having twelve thousand of its members "sealed in their foreheads" as God's peculiar property^b, and "having the Father's name engraven there" as an evidence of their relation to him. But we are not to suppose that there are no more in heaven than the number specified: for they are in reality a multitude that no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues^c."]

There are they adoring him with unceasing songs of praise—

[The song in which they join, though not specified here, is made known to us in a former chapter. It is "a new song;" because it was unknown to the bright morning stars which were first created, nor could possibly be sung by those who never fell. Hence it is said to be "a song which no man could learn, except those who had been redeemed from the earth." Hear the song itself, as reported to us by him who heard it: "They sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on earth." He then adds, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels, round about the throne and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing^d." Here are two things to be noticed; one is, that the song was *new*; for it could not be sung till the Lamb was slain; and

^a Heb. xii. 22.

^b Rev. vii. 4.

^c Rev. vii. 9.

^d Rev. v. 9—12.

the other is, that the angels are unable to join in the song of the redeemed: for whilst the redeemed celebrate his praises as having been "*slain for them*, and having *redeemed them* to God by his blood," the angels can only join so far as to acknowledge, that He is "*worthy to receive*" the praises that are so offered to him.

This chorus of the redeemed, swelled as it is by the acclamations and *amens* of all the angelic hosts^e, is "as the sound of many waters, and loud as thunder itself:" yet is the song so melodious, that every one of the redeemed accompanies it with his harp; for it is "the voice of harpers harping with their harps." The music of the temple-service in the days of Solomon must have been grand beyond all that men of this age can conceive: but not Solomon in all his glory could form a conception of that melody which John heard, and which, I pray God, we may be admitted to hear, and join in, to all eternity.

It is said of all this band, that "they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Whilst they were in this world, they endeavoured to walk in his steps, and to follow him in all his ways; and now they attend upon him through the boundless expanse of heaven, all vying, as it were, with each other in testifying their love and gratitude to their adorable Redeemer. As in the days of old, at the time of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, "the whole multitude followed him, crying, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest^f;" so now in heaven they follow him with similar acclamations, and rest not day nor night from this glorious employment^g.

Such are the circumstances related by the Apostle: but, to form any idea of the bliss enjoyed by the heavenly hosts, we must ourselves be partakers of it: the language of mortality cannot paint it; nor, if an angel were to come from heaven to describe it, could our feeble apprehensions grasp the mighty theme.]

In relation to this blessedness, the point which more particularly demands our attention is,

II. The character of those that are admitted to it—

This is minutely marked,

1. In its source—

["They have been redeemed from among men." Once they were in bondage even as other men: but God in his mercy delivered them "by a mighty hand and with an out-

^e Rev. v. 13, 14.

^f Matt. xxi. 9.

^g Rev. iv. 8.

stretched arm." Israel when in Egypt were an exact picture of them in their unregenerate state. Their subjection to sin and Satan was entire: nor could they by any means cast off the yoke with which they were bound. But God, in his tender mercy, pitied them; and sent his only dear Son to redeem them; to redeem them, by offering his own soul a ransom for them, and by enabling every one of them for himself to burst his bonds. Thus to God's sovereign love and mercy must their emancipation be traced in the first instance, and then to the efficacy of the Redeemer's blood, and the almighty power of his grace. As Israel were "a nation taken out from the midst of another nation for the praise of the glory of his grace," so are all that either are, or shall be, transferred to the heavenly Canaan, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they may shew forth the praises of him that hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light^h."

2. In its progress—

["They are a willing people, though made so in the day of God's powerⁱ:" and the very instant that they begin to taste redeeming love, and to experience the mighty working of God's power on their souls, they offer themselves up to God "as first-fruits to God and to the Lamb." The first-fruits of every thing were God's peculiar portion: nor could any man appropriate them to his own use without being guilty of sacrilege. And such are all who are truly converted unto God^k. Under this character then they present themselves to him: they know that "they are not their own, but his: and therefore they desire to glorify him with their bodies and their spirits, which are his^l." They account this "a reasonable service^m;" and they engage in it with their whole hearts.

Having consecrated themselves to God, they endeavour to be faithful to their engagements. This is what is meant, when it is said in my text, "They were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." It is of *spiritual* fornication that the Apostle speaks. This is a common figure in the Holy Scriptures. Men are often said to "go a whoring after their idols." But the saints in glory have kept themselves from spiritual, as well as from open and outward, idolatry. They have given up themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, as a virgin betroths herself to her husbandⁿ: and they have "kept themselves pure;" not transferring to any rival the regards which are due to God alone.

Nor is it from overt acts only that they have abstained, but

^h 1 Pet. ii. 9.

ⁱ Ps. cx. 3.

^k Jam. i. 18.

^l 1 Cor. vi. 20.

^m Rom. xii. 1.

ⁿ 2 Cor. xi. 2.

from unfaithfulness even of thought or desire. They know that God requires the heart: and that the smallest alienation of the affections from him would excite his just resentment. They have therefore laboured to be sincere and without offence before him: and through the grace and mercy of their God “they have been preserved blameless^o :” so that “in their mouth there was no guile; and they are found without fault before the throne of God.”

Here you see the whole Christian life depicted; and the process by which every saint in glory is fitted for his place. The whole work of grace originates with God, and is carried on by God to its final issue. But man is neither an unwilling nor inactive servant in the house of his God. He is aware that he must be meet for the inheritance of heaven before he can possibly enjoy it. This meetness therefore he aspires after, and labours for with all his might: and, through the operation of God's grace upon his soul, he is fully prepared for glory, being perfected after the Divine image, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.]

Permit me now to ADDRESS you all,

1. As candidates for heaven—

[Men who are candidates for earthly honours find that much labour is necessary for the attainment of their object. Be assured then, brethren, that notwithstanding heaven is a free gift of God for Christ's sake, yet must it be laboured for as much as if it were altogether the fruit of our own exertions: as it is said, “Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give unto you.” And permit me to ask, Is it not worth a whole life of most strenuous exertion? Consider only the representation that has been given of it: is it not desirable to be of that happy number, who are following the Lamb through all the courts of heaven, and with voice and harp ascribing to him all possible glory and praise?

But think of the alternative: think, if you are not admitted there, where will you be, and be to all eternity! There is no middle place between heaven and hell. The idea of purgatory is a mere Popish delusion. As, if you have not the mark of Jehovah's name upon your forehead, you must bear the stamp of Satan's children; so if you are not made partakers of the glories of heaven, you must for ever participate in the miseries of hell. See what is spoken but a few verses after my text. “If any man worship the beast, and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without

^o Jude, ver. 24.

mixture into the cup of his indignation: and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night." Now though this is spoken primarily of those who enter into the abominations of popery, and bear on their forehead or on their hand the mark of that idolatrous Church, it is true also of all who die in their sins: the persons that are not admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, are "cast out into outer darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever." Compare now these states: both those in heaven and those in hell are "in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb;" but the one, as the monuments of mercy, and joint-heirs of glory; the other, as monuments of vengeance, and heirs of wrath and fiery indignation. Need I then say to you, be diligent to make your calling and election sure? I pray you, consider how many there are who fall short of this inheritance. Of all that came out of Egypt, two only entered the promised land: and the perishing of all the rest in the Wilderness is set forth as an admonition to you, lest you also come short of the promised rest¹. I cannot then be too urgent with you on this important subject. I would have you all to succeed in this great enterprise, and so to approve yourselves to your Saviour now, that you may be counted worthy to dwell with him in a better world.]

2. As expectants of it—

Strange it is that every one conceives heaven to be his portion, though he never in the whole course of his life made one effort to obtain it. But, beloved brethren, you have already heard the character of those who are in heaven; and that to those only will heaven be assigned. Inquire then whether you have attained this character? What have you experienced of that great work, the work of redemption? Have you been delivered from the yoke of sin and Satan? Have you been brought out from an ungodly world, as the Israelites were from Egypt; and are you living like them under the guidance and government of Jehovah? Does your conscience bear witness for you, that you have presented yourselves to him as the first-fruits, desiring to be wholly and altogether his? When have you so surrendered up yourselves to him? Do not imagine that your dedication to him in baptism, or in any other *public* ordinance, is any evidence of your having *personally* fulfilled this duty, unless you are yet in the habit of renewing that dedication of yourselves to him *in secret*

from day to day. And, supposing that you have given yourselves to him, have you been faithful to your engagements, so that in the last day, when the time for your everlasting union with the heavenly Bridegroom shall come, we may “present you as a chaste virgin to Christ?” Have the world and the flesh so far lost their ascendant over you, that you no longer comply with their solicitations, or yield to their temptations? Finally, Can the heart-searching God attest, that, as far as respects any wilful sin, you are blameless and harmless, and shining as lights in the midst of a dark world? These things are indispensably necessary to any well-grounded expectation of the heavenly glory: and if, whilst destitute of these essential marks, you buoy up yourselves with the hopes of heaven, you do but deceive your own souls to your eternal ruin. I even appeal to yourselves: would you who have never touched a harp be able at a moment to accompany with it a band of music, and to join harmoniously in the sublimest strains? How then shall you, if undisciplined and unprepared, accompany the heavenly hosts in all their songs of praise? Their song, as you have before heard, is one which none but the sealed can learn: and were you admitted there in an unconverted state, your harp would yield nothing but discordant sounds, nor would a single note of your voice be in unison with the heavenly choir.

But I would hope and trust, that there are many here who on good grounds are expecting a portion among the saints in light. To such then I would say, “Press forward, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forward to that which is before.” And, if at any time the thought occur to your mind, Can such a sinner as I be saved? then look into heaven, and see who there are already around the throne: do you not see there a Manasseh, a Mary Magdalen, a dying thief, and a whole host from the Church at Corinth^a? Then there can be no reason for you, or any other person, to despond. Only seek to be interested in the redemption that Christ has wrought out for you, and every thing else will follow. Through him you shall be justified; through him you shall be sanctified; “through him you shall be presented unto God without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, yea, as holy and without blemish:” for to all who seek acceptance through him, “he is made of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”]

^a 1 Cor. vi. 10, 11.

MMDXVI.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO ALL NATIONS.

Rev. xiv. 6, 7. *I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come.*

ON many occasions we find angels employed by God to execute his purposes respecting men. Sometimes they have been sent as executioners of his judgments; but most generally as dispensers of some special mercy; for their more appropriate office is, as “ministering spirits, to minister unto the heirs of salvation.”

In the passage before us an angel is sent, not to an individual, or a family, or a single nation, but to the whole world; having received a commission to “preach the everlasting Gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people upon the face of the whole earth.” His mode of executing this commission also is made known to us; and the whole account will afford us very valuable instruction, whilst we consider,

I. His commission—

It is here manifestly intimated,

1. That the whole world need to have the Gospel preached to them—

[We are apt to imagine that every man may be saved by the religion which he professes: and to intimate the contrary is deemed a libel even upon the Deity himself. But on this subject we can know nothing except as we are informed by God himself: and we must not set up our opinions in opposition to his revealed will. We must receive with implicit faith the declarations of his word; and whether they accord with our preconceived views or not, we must rest satisfied, that the Judge of all the earth will do right. I am far from saying that God may not save some from amongst all nations, even though they have not a distinct knowledge of the Gospel: for God *may* do whatsoever seemeth him good; and we are no more at liberty to limit the exercise of his mercy, than we are

the rights of his justice. But "secret things belong to him; and the things which are revealed belong to us and to our children:" and the uniform testimony of revelation is, that men are all in a lost and perishing condition; that they all need a Saviour; and that "there is no other name given under heaven whereby any man can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ." This then is the testimony which we must bear, without presuming to be "wise above that which is written." Indeed the very circumstance of an angel being employed to preach the Gospel to the whole world, is itself a proof that the whole world needs to be instructed in it in order to their final salvation; for we cannot suppose that God would use such means for the information of the world, if the information itself were not greatly needed. We shall do well therefore to fix this as a settled principle in our minds, that as Christ has offered himself "a propitiation for the sins of the whole world," the whole world needs to be directed to him as the only ground of a sinner's hope.]

2. That the office of a preacher is one which even an angel from heaven may well affect—

[Think you that this angel counted his office an indignity? or that he regretted even his absence from the throne of God, whilst he was occupied in the discharge of it? No surely: a regard for God's honour and for the welfare of mankind would carry him forward with exquisite delight, whilst flying through the vast expanse of heaven. And let me say, that the office, by whomsoever discharged, if executed with fidelity and zeal, is as honourable as any that can be sustained on earth. We justly account it a great honour to be an ambassador from an earthly monarch, and especially if for the purpose of effecting peace between contending nations. But how infinitely more honourable is it to be an ambassador from the court of heaven, and a representative of the King of kings, to proclaim to a rebellious world the terms on which they shall be restored to his favour, and receive all the benefits which Omnipotence itself can confer upon them! Let none then think lightly of this office; let none imagine that talents of the most distinguished kind can be employed in any service more worthy of them, or that in any line whatever the most strenuous exertions can be more richly recompensed: for if a preacher be made an instrument of saving only one single soul, he has already gained that which is of more value than the whole world.]

Let us now turn our attention to,

II. His execution of it—

There are many who imagine that the Gospel consists merely in an exhibition of Christ as crucified for the sins of men. That this is the point to which all must lead, I readily acknowledge : but it is necessary that men should be awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger, in order to prepare their minds for a due reception of the Gospel salvation : “ The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick :” and, unless people feel their malady, it is in vain to speak to them of a remedy suited to it. The true mode of preaching the Gospel may be learned from the angel, in our text, who first calls men to a state of humiliation on account of sin ; then exhorts them to embrace the salvation offered them in the Gospel ; and then enforces his exhortation with a consideration calculated to stimulate them to the utmost care and diligence.

1. He calls men to a state of humiliation, on account of sin—

[The whole world are asleep, or rather “ dead, in trespasses and sins.” All fear of God, yea, all thought of God, is cast off; and men are as unmindful of their accountableness to him as if there were no God in heaven. To awaken them from their slumber, he opens his commission, by saying, and “ saying *with a loud voice*,” “ Fear God.” And in like manner would I “ lift up my voice like a trumpet,” yea, if I could speak, as the angel himself, like thunder, it would be no more than the occasion calls for, if peradventure I might awaken one single soul to a consideration of his lost estate. I say to you all then, “ FEAR GOD;” whatever be your age, whatever your condition, whether ye be old or young, or rich or poor, I say to every one of you individually as well as collectively, “ FEAR GOD:” for he is “ a great God, and of terrible majesty;” and ye have all greatly offended him, and are obnoxious to his everlasting displeasure. In the view of this, even a heathen monarch issued “ a decree that every man in his wide-extended dominions should tremble and fear before the God of heaven^a.” And well may this be inculcated on every human being: for “ it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” The inculcating of this too is a very essential part of the Gospel: for so was the Gospel ministered by the forerunner of our Lord, and by our Lord himself, and

^a Dan. vi. 25, 26.

by all his holy Apostles: they all preached "repentance towards God" as preparatory to "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ^b:" and he neglects a very essential part of his duty who does not make repentance a preliminary requisite to a due reception of the Gospel salvation.]

2. He exhorts them to embrace the salvation offered them in the Gospel—

[God has in his tender mercy sent his only dear Son to die for our redemption; and has told us, that through *him* he will be reconciled unto us, and that all who believe in him shall be justified from all things. This Gospel then we should receive with the profoundest reverence, and the most lively gratitude. In so doing we "give glory" to all his glorious perfections. We glorify his *wisdom and goodness*, which have devised such a plan for the salvation of a ruined world: we glorify his *love and mercy*, in accepting it: we glorify his *truth and faithfulness*, in expecting the accomplishment of his promises in the appointed way. It is said of Abraham, that when a child was promised to him in his old age, he "staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief, but was *strong in faith, giving glory to God*." Believe ye then, brethren, that this way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer is both suited to your wants, and sufficient for your necessities. Believe that, if you "look unto Jesus, you shall be saved;" and that "those who come unto him he will in no wise cast out." Do not dishonour him by any doubts either of his ability or willingness to save you. Do not for a moment assign limits to the mercy of your God, or to the power of Christ, who is "able to save you to the uttermost." If I may use such an expression, take God at his word; embrace his promises; rely upon them; plead them in prayer; expect the accomplishment of them to your souls: and know that sooner shall "heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or one tittle of his word shall fail."]

3. He enforces his exhortation with a consideration calculated to stimulate them to the utmost care and diligence—

[It is probable that there is some reference here to the judgments which will be inflicted on the anti-Christian powers, to make way for the more rapid diffusion of the Gospel. But that will be only a prelude, as it were, to the general judgment, when all the enemies of the Lord and of his Christ shall be finally destroyed. Of that period the Apostles often speak, with a view to detach our minds from present things, and to

^b Mark i. 4, 14, 15. Luke xxiv. 47. Acts xx. 21.

quicken us in our spiritual course: and so strongly did the Apostle insist upon this thought, that he judged it necessary afterwards to remove from his Thessalonian converts the erroneous impression, which, by the strength of his own representations, he had made upon their minds. Eighteen centuries have elapsed since that time; and consequently the destined period must be so much nearer its arrival. But, whether it be *in itself* near at hand or not, it is *as it respects us*; because at the instant of our dissolution all opportunity for repentance or faith is for ever closed. Can you think of this then, brethren, and delay this necessary work? What would not millions, who are gone into the eternal world, give for one single day to work out their salvation, if by any means it might be obtained? I pray you, lose not the present hour; but “to-day, whilst it is called to-day,” humble yourselves before God in dust and ashes, and embrace with all earnestness the salvation he has given you in the Gospel of his Son.]

Let me now yet further IMPROVE the subject,

1. In reference to yourselves—

[You generally acknowledge that the Gospel should be carried to heathen nations. But do not you yourselves need it as much as they? True, you are in some measure acquainted with the scheme of salvation: but to what purpose is it that you have a speculative knowledge of the Gospel, if you have not an experimental acquaintance with it in your souls? Let me then follow in the train of that divine messenger, and repeat to you his authoritative admonitions: “Fear God” — — — “Give glory to him” — — — Reflect how soon the hour of his judgment will have come, when all possibility of securing this salvation will be for ever terminated — — — Despise not his message, because it is delivered by a worm like unto yourselves; for the word, however weakly delivered, is God’s, and not mine: and therefore I beseech you to “receive it with meekness as an engrafted word, able to save your souls.”]

2. In reference to the general subject of missions—

[What can we need to recommend the office of a missionary, when we see it executed by an angel from heaven? Suppose he had been commissioned to inquire for an assistant, who amongst us would not have volunteered his services? Or, if he had felt the need of pecuniary aid, who would not gladly have contributed to the utmost of his power? Methinks, the society now established in our Church, in concurrence with other societies of a similar nature, is that angel from heaven: and the voice of that society, like that of Jehovah himself, is, “Who will go for us?” Are there not then many amongst

you ready to say, "Here am I; send me?" Would to God I could see such a zeal in the midst of you! Would to God that you were all, like that blessed angel, ready to deny yourselves, and make every sacrifice for the honour of your God! In the early ages of Christianity such a zeal was common; insomuch that the knowledge of Christ was in the space of thirty or forty years diffused through all the Roman empire: but now for these seventeen hundred years how little has been done towards the evangelizing of the world! Alas! not one sixth of the world knows so much as even the name of Christ; and of them, a very, very small portion, it is to be feared, knows him to any good effect. I call upon you then to awake from the supineness in which you have lain, and, by redoubled exertions, to redeem the time that has been lost, and the character of the Church to which you belong. The time for us to work is surely come; and if we enter into the sacred cause with suitable affection, we shall at least have the happiness of sowing what, at a future period, we may expect to produce an abundant harvest.]

MMDXVII.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE UNGODLY.

Rev. xiv. 9—11. *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

MINISTERS, who wish to discharge their duty conscientiously both to God and man, are placed in a very painful dilemma: if they declare faithfully the whole counsel of God, they are considered as harsh and severe: if, on the contrary, they keep back the more offensive truths, they contract an awful responsibility before God, to whom they must give an account of every soul that has perished through their unfaithfulness. What then are we to do? If the forbearing to alarm the consciences of our auditors

would be attended with no evil consequences to them, we might perhaps run the risk of displeasing God ourselves, rather than excite in them any unnecessary disquietude; but when the loss of their souls, and of our own, must infallibly result from such timidity, we feel a necessity laid upon us, and can no longer forbear. Yet, why need we apologize for delivering to men the message which God has sent them? Did not *an angel* deliver it, when first it was announced? and did he not deliver it with a *loud voice*, as feeling its importance, and determined, if possible, to arrest the attention of all the world? Let us then be pardoned for treading in the footsteps of an angel, and for seeking, in the way that he adopted, the welfare of your souls.

In the words before us there are two things which we shall endeavour to point out:

I. Who they are against whom God here denounces his judgments—

All Protestant writers are agreed, that “the beast” here mentioned, and more fully treated of in the preceding chapter, is the Papal Hierarchy. The Romish Church, from the time that it attained a sovereignty over other Churches, has been an *idolatrous, superstitious, persecuting* power. It has been *idolatrous*, in that it worships saints and images, and the consecrated wafer; and blasphemously ascribes to its supreme head the titles and prerogatives of God himself. It is *superstitious*, in that it substitutes penances, and pilgrimages, and other ordinances of man’s device, in the place of Christ, our only Advocate and Propitiation. And it is *persecuting*, insomuch that the cruelties exercised by Pagans themselves against the primitive Christians, do not exceed those which she has committed against those who have asserted their Christian liberty, and refused to comply with her abominations. But as, on the one hand, we cannot suppose that *all* the members of that Church shall perish; (for God will discriminate between those who serve him to the best of their knowledge, and those

who, with high pretences to piety, are enemies to all that is good;) so, on the other hand, all who drink into the spirit of that Church, or, in the language of our text, “receive the mark of the beast in their forehead or their hand,” will certainly be found amongst those who shall endure the judgments here denounced against them. Amongst these therefore we must specify,

1. The adherents of idolatry—

[We do not worship saints or images: true; but are there none who arrogate to themselves an authority in opposition to that of God, or who yield to such authority in points directly contrary to God’s commands? What is this, but to usurp, or acknowledge, a power superior to God; or, in the language of the Apostle, “to worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for evermore^a?” We do not mean to magnify every instance of wilfulness into an act of idolatry: but, where it is habitually exercised, or submitted to, in opposition to God’s will, there is, in fact, a power elevated above that of God himself: and whether God will resent such usurpation, you yourselves may judge.]

2. The advocates for superstition—

[Superstition is not confined to penances and pilgrimages: it exists wherever there is a substitution made of any human observances in the place of our Redeemer’s sacrifice. Some things may be more palpably absurd than others; but whether we seek to establish a righteousness of our own, by counting beads and repeating the Lord’s prayer, or by a certain round of religious duties, we equally invalidate the Gospel, and make void the death of Christ^b. In fact, *this*, more than any thing else, was the ground of separation from the Church of Rome. Much as transubstantiation and the infallibility of the Pope were objected to, it was the doctrine of human *merit* that most of all kindled the zeal of the Reformers, and stimulated them to protest against such fatal errors: and in proportion as we entertain hopes of *meriting* salvation by any works of our own, we return to Popery, and cherish the most damning corruption of “the beast.”]

3. The abettors of persecution—

[It is a strange idea entertained by some, that persecution for the Gospel’s sake has ceased. But if fires be not now kindled for the extirpation of pretended heretics, is therefore

^a Rom. i. 25.

^b Gal. v. 2, 4.

persecution ceased? Are there no such things as “cruel mockings” yet in existence? Yea, where is the person who is at all active in the cause of Christ, that is not despised and hated *on that very account*? Let him possess every qualification that can entitle him to respect, that one fault of loving and serving the Lord Jesus Christ, is sufficient to despoil him of all, and to render him an object of derision. Nor is it to any abhorrence of persecution that we are indebted for the measure of peace that we enjoy, but to the laws, and the knowledge which men possess on the subject of religious toleration. The same spirit that has “made war with the saints” in the Romish Church, still exists in ours: and inasmuch as it does so, we “bear the image of the beast in our forehead, and are in danger of the judgments which are treasured up for it.]

Having ascertained the characters here spoken of, let us inquire into,

II. Their doom—

Whether the metaphors that are used to describe the punishment of the ungodly are to be understood in any thing like a literal sense, we will not pretend to determine: nor is it of any importance to us to know: for, though there should be no lake of fire and brimstone to torment our bodies, yet will there be torment of some kind or other both to our bodies and souls; and that torment cannot be more fitly represented to us in our present state, than by the images used in our text. We can form some little idea of the internal agony arising from the drinking of a cup composed of burning ingredients; and of the outward agony which we should experience in being burnt alive: and therefore God is pleased to represent his judgments by these images. And, O! what a terrible idea is that of a cup filled with the wrath and indignation of an incensed God; and that of a lake of fire and brimstone, “kindled to the highest degree of fury by the breath of the Almighty^c!” But not to dwell on these metaphors, let us descend to those plainer matters which characterize the misery of the damned. It will be,

1. Unalleviated—

^c Isai. xxx. 33.

[Here, in our deepest troubles, we find something to mitigate our grief, some mixture of sweet in our cup of bitterness. There is some occupation to amuse us, some thought to sooth us, some friend to console us. But in that world of misery, our cup is "without the smallest mixture" of any thing to assuage our anguish; no engagement to draw away our attention; nothing in the retrospect or prospect to afford us the smallest consolation. *Here* we have "mercy and judgment;" *there* we shall have "judgment without mercy." Small as a drop of water would be to one burning in a lake of fire, it cannot there be granted to us^d.]

2. Incessant—

[Whatever our afflictions be, whether of mind, or body, or of both together, the very weakness of our frame procures us some respite; and the overwhelming nature of our troubles leads to an occasional suspension of them. But in the future state of our existence, our bodies and souls will be strengthened on purpose that they may be capable of suffering incessant torture. The unhappy sufferers never close their eyes to sleep; they "rest not day nor night;" they are always "weeping, always wailing, always gnashing their teeth" with inexpressible anguish.]

3. Unpitied—

[The sons and daughters of affliction find in this world some benevolent person ready to compassionate their state at least, if they be not able to relieve their misery. But those who are suffering the wrath of God, though tormented in the "presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," find no pity whatsoever. Those benevolent spirits, who once would gladly have ministered to them with the tenderest solicitude, now hear their cries, and behold their writhings, without any other emotion than that of acquiescence and perfect approbation. Yea, they themselves are willing instruments of their torture; "gathering them together as tares, and binding them up in bundles, and casting them into the fire^e." The Lord Jesus too, who once left the bosom of his Father for them, and assumed their nature, and groaned, and wept, and bled for them, and would have accounted all the travail of his soul richly recompensed, if they had but availed themselves of his proffered mercy, even He now beholds them, and, so far from pitying their misery, "laughs at their calamity, and mocks now that his judgments are come upon them^f:" he even finds "rest and comfort to his own soul from the vengeance that he inflicts upon them^g." And there

^d Luke xvi. 24.

^e Matt. xiii. 30, 39, 41.

^f Prov. i. 24—26.

^g Ezek. v. 13.

is reason to believe that every created being, not excepting the dearest relatives of those who perish, will be like-minded with Christ and the holy angels, and will applaud, and even rejoice in, the sentence that shall be executed, whether it be on the ungodly at large, or on their own relations in particular^h.]

4. Everlasting—

[Whilst here, the troubled look forward to death as the termination of their woes: and men often find satisfaction in the decease of their dearest relatives, from the consideration that they now “rest from their labours.” But in that place of torment, they “cry to the rocks and hills to fall upon them, and to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb;” but they cannot obtain this desired end: they wish for death, but it flees from them. Could they but hope that their misery would end at the expiration of millions of years, they would instantly congratulate themselves on their prospects: but the thought of eternity, O this fearful thought adds such a poignancy to their anguish, as no finite imagination can at all conceive. Could the fire ever be burnt out, or their powers be consumed by it, they would rejoice: but their punishment is everlastingⁱ; “their worm dieth not, and their fire cannot be quenched^k,” on the contrary, “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.”]

Most of you will anticipate me in the following
REFLECTIONS—

1. How astonishing is the supineness of the ungodly!

[Were the cry of fire to be made in a crowded assembly, what pressing would be made to escape the devouring element, and how backward would people be to believe that they were not in danger! But let God, and his ministers, warn them of eternal fire, and none will pay the smallest regard to their voice. O sad infatuation! For, “who can stand before his indignation? who can abide in the fierceness of his anger^l?” “Who amongst us can dwell with the devouring fire? who amongst us can dwell with *everlasting* burnings^m?” May God awaken all of us from our security; and so lead us to examine our real character, that we may humble ourselves before him, and “flee from the wrath to come!”]

2. How happy are they who have the mark of God's image upon them!

^h Rev. xix. 1—6.

ⁱ Matt. xxv. 46.

^k Mark ix. 43—48.

^l Nahum i. 6.

^m Isai. xxxiii. 14.

[Blessed be God! there are many whose dispositions and habits are altogether changed; who were once idolatrous, and superstitious, yea, perhaps contemners and persecutors of real godliness, but are now enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and "renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness." You also are "marked in your foreheadsⁿ;" but "your spot is the spot of God's children^o." Blessed indeed are ye; for "ye shall be counted worthy to escape all those things which are coming on the ungodly, and to stand before the Son of man" in his glory. For you is prepared a very different cup, a cup "wherein is fulness of joy, and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore^p." Yes, whilst "fornicators, liars, hypocrites," and sinners of every description "shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone^q," you shall dwell in the presence of your God, and enjoy an inconceivable happiness without mixture, intermission, or end.]

ⁿ Ezek. ix. 4.

^o Deut. xxxii. 5.

^p Ps. xvi. 11.

^q Rev. xxi. 8. with Ps. ix. 17.

MMDXVIII.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF DEPARTED SAINTS.^a

Rev. xiv. 13. *I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

AS connected with the context, these words were intended to comfort and encourage those who should suffer martyrdom for the cause of Christ. The destruction of Antichrist is declared in the preceding verses. But as, in the meantime, the saints would be harassed with grievous persecutions, they are here taught to endure their trials with patience, in an assured expectation of a glorious recompence at the instant of their departure from the body. This will account for the very extraordinary way in which the most simple of all truths is here both announced and attested. *The blessedness of departed saints*, one would have thought, should not have needed to be promulgated in so solemn a way; especially when Christianity had been for a long period propagated,

^a Intended for a *Funeral Sermon*.

and, if I may so say, established throughout all the Roman Empire. But the circumstance of its being thus solemnly declared may well lead us to contemplate it with peculiar attention.

Let us, then, consider the blessedness of departed saints,

I. As announced from heaven to the Apostle John—

But who are they who are here pronounced blessed?

[Some imagine that *martyrs* alone were referred to: and it is certain that they were primarily in the mind of him who spake; because they are the persons to whom, more particularly, the preceding context belongs. But yet it cannot be said of *all* martyrs, that they are "blessed:" for we are assured, on infallible authority, that persons may go, and probably have gone, from the flames of martyrdom to those more tremendous flames that never can be quenched. St. Paul says, we may even "give our bodies to be burned, and yet want that charity" which is indispensable to our final admission into heaven^b. We must extend our views to *believers*: yet even of believers it is not necessarily and universally true, that they are blessed: for we know, that there are some who "for awhile believe, but in time of temptation fall away^c." In truth, it cannot be certainly said of *any*, whilst they are yet alive, that they shall be happy in the eternal world; because there is no human being of whom it can be infallibly declared, that he shall persevere unto the end. After the fall of David, and Solomon, and Peter, and Demas, who shall venture to say, that he may not, after all his profession, "make shipwreck of the faith?" It is of "the dead" only that it can be affirmed, that they shall *certainly* be saved: and of those only who "die in the Lord." They must first be in Christ by a living faith; they must then "abide in him," bringing forth fruit to his glory; and, lastly, they must "die in him," humbly "hoping in him even to the end," and being "faithful unto death." Persons so living, and so dying, are truly blessed.]

And why is their blessedness so peculiarly proclaimed?

[It is announced, by an audible voice from heaven: and the Apostle is commanded to record it, for the benefit of all future generations. Whence was the necessity for *such* a manifestation of so plain a truth? Had it not been known in

^b 1 Cor. i. 3.

^c Matt. viii. 13.

the Church as long as any written record of God's mind and will had existed? True; it was known: but yet it was foreseen that it would be obscured by that corrupt Church that would in due time arise; and a special revelation of it therefore was given, in this extraordinary manner, for the comfort of God's saints whom that Church would persecute; and for a warning to those who should give way to fear, and turn from the holy commandment committed to them. That persecuting Church would inculcate the doctrine of purgatory, in order to enrich her ministers: but those who should die in defence of the Gospel might rest assured that their felicity would be immediate and complete, as soon as ever they should have sealed their testimony with their blood; as would also be the misery of those who either inflicted those sufferings, or, through fear of suffering, renounced their holy profession. The faithful should "from henceforth," from the very moment of their death, be happy; but the others, from the instant of their departure from the body, should "drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which should be poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation." The faithful *universally*, and the faithful *exclusively*, might apply to themselves this glorious truth. *They* should be "blessed;" but *they alone*: "the fearful and the unbelieving should altogether be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where they should immediately and to all eternity endure the second death^d."

Lest, after all, this declaration should not have its due weight on our minds, we are led to contemplate it,

II. As attested by the Spirit, to every child of man—

Were the Spirit's testimony conveyed only in a way of simple asseveration, it would be amply sufficient to engage our fullest confidence: but it is given in such a way as to approve itself to the judgment of every considerate man: for, with the testimony, he makes known the grounds and sources of that very blessedness, to the certainty of which his testimony is borne.

1. They (the departed saints) "rest from their labours"—

[The trials of those who are called to suffer martyrdom are greater than we, who enjoy the protection of the civil magistrate, can imagine. I say again, We, of this happy land,

^d Rev. xxi. 8.

have no idea of the horrors of the *inquisition*, or of the cruelties exercised by the Papal Church. Even in our own land, in former days, multitudes of the most holy men have been burnt alive for their fidelity to Christ. O! what a transition must those holy saints have experienced, from the flames of martyrdom to the bosom of their Lord! But, in truth, the labours of every saint are very great: it is an arduous course that they have to run; a distressing warfare to maintain. Hear the holy Apostle himself groaning under the burthen of his in-dwelling corruptions, and crying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Those, indeed, who think but little of eternity, may pass through life without much care or conflict: but they who know the value of the soul, and consider that, by every act, word, and thought, they are treasuring up for themselves an ever-increasing weight, either of misery or of glory, to all eternity; they, I say, feel a burthen upon the mind, a fear of falling into sin, a desire to approve themselves to God, a longing to be dissolved, that they may be with Christ: and to them rest will be sweet, as to a weary traveller, or as the haven after a tempestuous voyage.]

2. "Their works do follow them"—

[Their works, however excellent, do not go before them to receive a recompence on the ground of merit; but they follow them as evidences of their integrity, and as proofs of their union with the Lord Jesus Christ. In this view, the very least work they ever performed for Christ, and by virtue derived from him, even "the giving of a cup of cold water to a disciple for his sake, shall in no wise lose its reward." Every prayer that they ever offered, yea, the very groans by which their feelings found an indistinct utterance; and their tears, which from time to time were treasured up in God's vial; shall then be brought forth by him as witnesses for them, and as demonstrations, that, in his final decisions, God conducts every thing with perfect equity. Indeed, if God were not to bring forward their works with a view to future retribution, he would account himself unjust: as St. Paul has said; "God is not unrighteous, that he should forget your works and labour of love which ye have shewed towards his name." Though, as I have already said, our works can challenge nothing at his hand on the ground of merit, they may, and shall, challenge a reward of grace, and actually be the measure of our recompence at that day: for God will deal with every man according to his own works; and "every man shall receive according to his own labour." How truly blessed *then* will be the man who "died

^e Rom. vii. 24.

in the Lord!" Perhaps, at times, he was ready to doubt whether he should find acceptance with God *at all*, or not: but now, to his unutterable joy, he hears his Saviour say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Now, then, his utmost desires are all satisfied; and he is completely happy in the bosom of his God.]

Let me now CONCLUDE, with briefly adverting to the text—

1. In reference to the deceased—

[— — — — —^f]

^f Here may be stated the character of *the deceased*.

The character of the person, on occasion of whose death this Sermon was preached, was as near to perfection as could well be expected in the present state of the Church. The Author, in the space of forty years, has seen few that he considers as equal to her, and never one that was superior. She was indeed "a Mother in Israel." Her name was Jane Chapman. She was one of the first-fruits of the Author's ministry: and during nearly forty years she maintained so undeviating a course of piety, as to be the admiration of all who knew her. Till about the age of fifty-three, she lived ignorant of God and of his Christ. Her mind was first awakened to a sense of her lost condition by reading *Vivian's Dialogues between a Minister and his Parishioners*: and, from the moment that she sought for acceptance with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, her soul was filled with peace and joy in believing. Doubtless there were variations in her frames, as well as in those of others: but the general tenour of her life was remarkably peaceful; and she closed a most honourable career of piety, at the age of ninety-one. What the particular character of her religion was, shall now be stated in few words; but not so much for the purpose of doing honour to her, (though she is worthy to be held in the highest honour,) as for the benefit of those into whose hands this brief memorial may fall.

Her religion, then, was *modest and unassuming*: there was nothing of that obtrusive forwardness which is so common amongst the professors of our days, and so justly odious both to God and man. It was also *fraught with humility and contrition*. A deep sense of her utter unworthiness abode at all times upon her mind: yet there was nothing of gloom about her, nothing of melancholy; for her contrition was tempered with a lively faith, a *faith* that was remarkably *simple*. There was no leaning to any thing of her own; nor any doubting of the sufficiency that was in Christ. Her whole life was one act of faith: she "lived entirely by faith in the Son of God, as having loved *her*, and given himself for *her*." At the same time it did not shew itself in a bold unhallowed confidence, but in a meek and humble affiance: and it was *operative* upon all her tempers, her spirit, her conduct, insomuch that it was really her "meat and her drink to do the will of God:" and so *uniform* was *her deportment*,

2. In reference to those who are yet living—

[Inquire, I pray you, whether ye be “in Christ:” for, if ye be not in him, and abide not in him, it is in vain to hope that ye can “die in him” — — — It is in vain also to dream of blessedness in the eternal world. This is the privilege of those only who “live and die in the Lord” — — — O ye who are strangers to a life of faith in the Son of God, think what your feelings will be, when *your* works shall *follow you* to the bar of judgment! In what light will they *then* appear? What judgment will you *then* form of a life devoted to the concerns of time and sense? Will a neglect of God and of your eternal interests be thought so venial *then*, as you account it *now*? Will *such* a witness benefit you at the bar of judgment? Or will the prize that shall be accorded to the successful racer and the victorious warrior, be held forth to you? No; the “rest” which is here spoken of, is reserved only for the weary traveller, who has walked with God, and “held on his way even to the end.” Let this record then, which was written for your instruction, sink deep into your ears: and cease not to cry mightily to God for his converting grace, that you yourselves may be that character, for whose consolation it was so announced, and for whose encouragement it was so attested.]

that she seemed to have been cast into the very mould of the Gospel, and to possess, as far as the frailty of our fallen nature would admit, “the very mind that was in Christ Jesus.” She was truly a *light*, not only in the world, but in the Church to which she belonged: and, whilst her graces were extremely diversified, and capable, like the rays of light, of bearing a distinct scrutiny, they were so blended (the sombre with the brilliant), and kept in such proportioned measure and simultaneous motion, as to display a brilliancy which it was impossible to behold and not admire. Her death was such as might be expected: truly it might be said of her, “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.” Her last words were, “Come, Lord Jesus! I long for thee. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!”—May the latter end, both of him who writes this Memorial, and him who reads it, be like hers! Amen, and Amen!

MMDXIX.

THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE LAMB.

Rev. xv. 3, 4. *And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?*

THE reign of Antichrist, and his ultimate destruction, occupy a large portion of the Revelation of St. John. His destruction has been foretold in the chapter which precedes my text; and is more circumstantially declared in that which follows it. In the chapter before us we have an introductory vision, representing the joy and triumph which the glorified saints would express on that occasion. But respecting the particular circumstances of the vision, commentators are by no means agreed. Where this is the case, I would not presume to speak with confidence, especially where I am under the necessity of differing from those which are most generally, and most justly, approved. But it appears to me, that too little attention has been paid to the context; and that if the parallel, which is evidently drawn between the deliverance at the Red Sea and our redemption by Christ, be taken as a clue, the whole will be unravelled, and simplicity itself will pervade that, which, with any other interpretation, will present nothing to our view but inexplicable obscurity.

“A sea of glass” is mentioned before, in the fourth chapter^a; where it is supposed to refer to the brazen sea which was in the temple, and which was filled with water for the service of the priests^b. But we are not on that account *limited* to that view of it in this place. It is well known, that the same images are used in reference to different things, especially in this highly figurative book: and the reference must always be determined by the context. Now consider, What is the subject that is here spoken of? It is the destruction of all the enemies of God and of his Christ. And what is *the illustration* given of it? It is taken from the destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptian hosts in the Red Sea. And what are *the terms in which this deliverance is celebrated*? They precisely accord with those which were used by Moses and the Israelites on that occasion; as we shall more distinctly point out in our further view of the subject. Now take this clue, and the whole

^a Rev. iv. 6.

^b 1 Kings vii. 23—26.

vision will be extremely clear, and perfectly harmonious in all its parts, without any occasion for fanciful conjectures. We will paraphrase the whole in conformity with this idea.

“I saw, as it were, a sea,” where “the saints had got the victory” over their persecuting and blood-thirsty enemies: and it was, “as it were, a sea of glass mingled with fire:” the waters, having overwhelmed all God’s enemies, were now calm, and clear as crystal itself, whilst the coruscations of light emanating from the pillar of fire, and shining with the brightest possible effulgence, made the whole sea appear as if it were mingled with fire^c. And I saw the victorious saints “standing (close) upon it^d.” And I heard them “sing a song to the Lamb” of God, precisely similar to that which was sung by Moses and the Israelites at the Red Sea, adoring “their God and King” as the sole author of their deliverance, and prophetically declaring, that he shall in due time “reign over all nations for ever and ever^e.”

This song we now proceed to consider. The former part of it consists of retrospective adoration; and the latter part, of prospective exultation and triumph.

Let us notice what is spoken by them in a way—

I. Of retrospective adoration—

Filled with the profoundest gratitude, they celebrate,

1. The deliverance they have experienced—

[Great was the deliverance vouchsafed to Israel; as Moses said, “In the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble^f.” But beyond

^c This is a common appearance of water reflecting the rays of the rising or setting sun.

^d The not adverting to *this* sense of the word ἐπὶ (*apud, prope, juxta*: see Schleusner,) seems to have been the occasion of most of the strange explanations given of the whole passage.

^e Compare ver. 2—4. with Exod. xv. 1, 6, 18.

^f Exod. xv. 7.

all comparison greater is that deliverance which the saints experience from the enemies of their salvation: and, when their triumphs are complete, they will have proportionably greater reason to sing, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty!" Dreadful have been the sufferings which multitudes have endured from the antichristian powers. But it is not from a mere human foe that they have been rescued, but from the great dragon, that old serpent, the Devil, and from all his hosts. Nor is it from a mere temporal death that they have escaped, but from everlasting death in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Nor is it by a mere exercise of power that this deliverance has been effected for them, but by the incarnation and death of God's co-equal, co-eternal Son; from whence it is that they sing, "Great and marvellous are thy works, *Lord God Almighty*;" "just and true are thy ways, Thou King of Saints:" for, *as Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel*, was their King, and took them under his own immediate government, *so is "the Lord God Almighty our King,"* even "*the King of all the saints*," that ever have been or ever shall be saved. It is "the Mighty God," who, by the wonders he has wrought for us, is become the "the Prince of Peace^g."]

2. The perfections of God displayed in it—

[Most cruel had been the conduct of Pharaoh towards the children of Israel: and God had repeatedly declared, both to him and to Israel themselves, that he would deliver them out of his hands. When therefore Pharaoh, with all his host, was destroyed in the Red Sea, Moses particularly noticed the correspondence between his impiety and the judgments inflicted on him: "The enemy said, I will pursue; I will overtake; I will divide the spoil; my soul shall be satisfied upon them: I will draw my sword: my hand shall destroy. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters^h." But view the perfections of God in the work of redemption. Verily, "God knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punishedⁱ." Or, take a more comprehensive view of it: see Justice, not merely as honoured by the atonement made for sin, but as demanding salvation, if I may so speak, for those for whom it was offered; demanding it, as due to him who made that atonement, and as due to those who trust in it for their acceptance before God. See Truth also fulfilling all the promises of God to his believing people, and making the very rage of their enemies the occasion of displaying more abundantly in their behalf his power and grace. Not even Mercy itself will appear more glorious to

^g Isai. ix. 6.

^h Exod. xv. 9, 10.

ⁱ 2 Pet. ii. 9.

the redeemed soul in heaven, than will these *once hostile* perfections of justice and truth: for whilst the saint was in his unconverted state, these were the perfections which most loudly called for the judgments of God upon him; but, on his believing in Christ, they instantly became his advocates, and from thenceforth will remain through eternal ages his greatest security. As the Lord Jesus is "faithful and just to forgive him his sins," so will he be in confirming to him that forgiveness for ever and ever.

Here I must particularly call your attention to the correspondence between the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. Moses sang, "Who is like unto thee, O God, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders^k?" So, in the words following my text, God's holiness is acknowledged; "Thou only art holy;" whilst, in my text itself, all the other perfections of the Deity are magnified and adored.]

The song of the redeemed proceeds yet farther in strains,

II. Of prospective exultation and triumph—

How forcible is the appeal which they make to the whole universe!

[It is particularly said of the Israelites on that occasion, that "when they saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses^l." And certainly we cannot suppose, that there was so much as one among them that was not deeply impressed with the mercy vouchsafed unto him. And shall there be found one amongst those who profess to have been redeemed by Christ, "who will not fear him, and glorify his name?" It is said of the converts in the millennial age, that "they shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days^m." And indeed it is impossible to contemplate this goodness, and not desire to give up ourselves entirely to him. Such a surrender of ourselves to him must appear to all "a reasonable serviceⁿ." Having been "bought with such a price," even "with the precious blood of that spotless Lamb^o," what can we think of for a moment, but to "glorify him with our bodies and our spirits which are his^p?"

^k Exod. xv. 11.

^l Exod. xiv. 31. N. B. This is the chapter appointed to be read on *Easter-even*, which marks the suitableness of the subject to that day.

^m Hos. iii. 5.

ⁿ Rom. xii. 1.

^o 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

^p 2 Cor. vi. 20.

And have we not abundant encouragement to do so? Look at the Israelites at the Red Sea. How many of them perished in the sea? Not one. And how many of their enemies escaped destruction? Not one; "The waters covered them; *there was not one of them left*^a." And shall it not be so with those who commit themselves to the guidance of the Lamb? Will not He also "make the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" Yes, "they shall go over *dry-shod*."^b As the Hebrew Youths in the furnace "had not so much as the smell of fire pass upon them," so shall the whole body of the redeemed escape from their trials without even the shadow of an injury sustained by them. We cannot conceive a greater disparity than between Pharaoh with his "six hundred chariots of war," and the unarmed hosts of Israel with a million of women and children to protect: but God was on their side: and God is on our side too: and "it is not his will that one of his little ones should perish^c." It matters not how numerous or potent our enemies may be: let us only fear "the King of saints," and confide in him; and we shall soon "behold them all dead upon the sea-shore^d."]

What the redeemed in their song inculcate as so reasonable, they look forward to as certainly to be accomplished in due season throughout the whole earth—

[This is very particularly insisted on in the song of Moses: "The people shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed: the mighty men of Moab, trembling, shall take hold upon them: all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall on them: and the Lord shall reign for ever and ever^e." So shall our adorable Redeemer be feared throughout the whole earth, as it is said in the words following my text, "All nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments^f (thy saving truths) are made manifest." The obligation to fear and glorify our blessed Lord is becoming more extensively known: and the time is not far distant now when it shall be universally known and universally acknowledged. The wonderful works that he has wrought shall not be heard so partially and with such indifference as they now are: the glad tidings of redemption shall be carried to the utmost ends of the earth, and "all flesh shall see the salvation of God:" "All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." Blessed prospect! worthy to be

^a Ps. cvi. 11.^b Isai. li. 10.^c Isai. xi. 15.^d Matt. xviii. 14.^e Exod. xiv. 30.^f Exod. xv. 14—18.^g δικαίωματα.

celebrated by the heavenly hosts ! and worthy of the incessant attention of every child of man !]

And now let me ASK, Who will not fear and glorify our redeeming God ?

[Are any of you who are here present prepared to say, that he does not deserve this tribute at your hands? What would you have thought of an Israelite who should have made such an assertion at the Red Sea? And, if you would have condemned him as a graceless and ungrateful wretch, what must you think of yourselves, who have experienced such infinitely richer mercy at his hands? O come; come and stand upon this sea of glass: behold its waves all calmed and smooth as crystal itself: see the coruscations of the cloud, and the impress of the Deity himself upon it: reflect on what has been wrought for you. Ponder the height and depth and length and breadth of the incomprehensible love contained in it: take your harps: tune them to the songs of the redeemed above: begin the song of Moses and the Lamb: join, with however feeble notes, the choir above: and look forward to the day when you shall strike your harps even as they do; and your notes shall be heard as loud and as melodious as any of theirs. O blessed day! "Look for it: hasten to it." It is but a little time longer, that you have to contend with principalities and powers. Your victory over them is sure: and shall speedily be consummated. Your enemies are following you indeed, as Pharaoh did, saying, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them." But, in a little moment, "God will blow with his wind; and the sea shall cover them: and they shall sink as lead in the mighty waters^z." To the weakest amongst you all, is this consolatory message sent: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing: and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought^a." May this glorious consummation speedily be accomplished! Even so, Amen, and Amen!]

^z Exod. xv. 9, 10.

^a Isai. xli. 10—12.

MMDXX.

REPENTANCE.

Rev. xvi. 9. *And they repented not to give Him glory.*

THROUGHOUT this chapter, the Apostle is speaking of the seven last plagues which were to be poured out upon the earth by the instrumentality of seven different angels, each of them having a vial of wrath committed to his hands for that purpose^a. As no man can with certainty determine the periods and the events to which these prophecies refer, I shall forbear to speak of them, any further than to observe, that God would by these afflictive dispensations bring men to repentance; but “they repented not to give Him glory.” The same, alas! may be said of too many amongst ourselves: for whose benefit I propose to consider the subject of repentance, and to commend it to them,

I. As giving glory to God—

I conceive that all will readily acknowledge that they need repentance; so that I need not at present enter upon that point, or endeavour to convince any that it is their duty to repent. But the true light in which repentance should be viewed is not generally seen: it is regarded only as a means of averting wrath: whereas it should be considered as “giving glory to God.” Sin has greatly dishonoured God: it, in fact, pours contempt on every perfection of the Deity, saying, “Tush, God shall not see; neither will the Almighty regard it.” Repentance, on the contrary, honours God, and “gives glory to Him;”

1. As an omnipresent and omniscient God—

[Repentance, if it be really genuine, enters into all the secrets of the soul, and spreads them before God; acknowledging, that God has seen them all, and that he will surely call us into judgment for them — — — Now, I entreat you, brethren, to honour God in this view; and, like Achan, to “give glory to Him, confessing” before him what no human

^a Rev. xv. 1, 7.

eye has ever seen, even the most hidden abominations of your hearts^b — — —]

2. As a just and holy God—

[An impenitent man considers his sins as light and venial; and thinks that God may well overlook them, without any expressions of his wrath and indignation. But a true penitent regards God as “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” and as bound, for the honour of his own moral government, to execute vengeance on the transgressors of his law. Real humility will justify God in all his threatenings; and will tremble at them, as sure to be executed in their appointed season — — — Do ye then, beloved, see how impossible it is for you ever to dwell in the Divine presence, unless you be first cleansed from your guilt in “the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,” and purified from your pollutions by the influences of the Holy Spirit. See this; feel this; acknowledge this; and hope for mercy in no other way than this — — —]

3. As a merciful and gracious God—

[Nothing but a persuasion that God is merciful can ever encourage true penitence. Without this view of the Deity, a man will lie down in utter despair — — — But look into the Scriptures; hear the representation which Jehovah gives of his own character, as “merciful and gracious, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;” and then will you come to him, not merely as to a Governor and a Judge, but as to a Father and a Friend — — —]

4. As a true and faithful God—

[Question not his invitations or his promises: but take them; trust in them; plead them before the mercy-seat; and determine, that, if you ever perish, you will perish at the foot of the cross, looking to Jesus as your only hope, and resting altogether on his meritorious death and passion — — — This is the posture of every true penitent: nor shall any sinner in the universe, who thus comes to God, ever fail of obtaining mercy at his hands — — —]

But I would commend repentance to you further,

II. As answering the end of all his dispensations—

God “delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live.” To bring men to him with penitential sorrow, and thus to effect their restoration to his favour, is the end of all his dispensations. It is the end,

^b Josh. vii. 19.

1. Of his mercies—

[Considering what a world this is, it is wonderful that God does not break forth in indignation against us, and overwhelm us all, as he did Sodom and Gomorrah. But on the great mass of mankind he is conferring the richest benefits from day to day; “causing his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and his rain to descend on the just and on the unjust.” Let all of us survey the dealings of God with us from our youth up; and we shall see that God has borne with us beyond all that we could have reasonably expected; and that our “blessings have been double” the amount of the judgments we have merited^c. And what has been God’s design in all these dispensations? Has it been to encourage our thoughtlessness, and to lull us asleep in our sins? No: it has been, as St. Paul expressly tells us, “to lead us to repentance^d.” And shall not these mercies be improved for this end? Let us blush, and be ashamed, that ever we could continue in rebellion against so good a God, and so basely requite our heavenly Benefactor — — —]

2. Of his judgments—

[God does sometimes strive with men in a way of merited displeasure: and, when he does so, he bids us “hear the rod, and Him that hath appointed it.” And is there any thing difficult to be understood in such dispensations as these? No: he has told us “wherefore he visits men for sin:” and, if he have threatened to punish the impenitent “seven-fold more for their sins,” and “to scourge them with scorpions,” the deduction is clear, namely, that “he chastises us for our profit, that he may make us partakers of his holiness.” He seeks by all means to “bring us to repentance, and to the acknowledgment of the truth.” Has he then afflicted any of us, either in our own persons, or in the persons of those who are dear unto us? Are we troubled in any respect, in mind, body, or estate? Let us make it an occasion of inquiring “wherefore God contendeth with us;” and of turning unto him with truly penitential sorrow, if by any means he turn from his fierce anger, and be pacified towards us^e — — —]

Let me conclude with a word of salutary ADVICE—

1. Let your repentance be genuine—

[Let it not be such as is but too common in a season of affliction, a *forced* acknowledgment of sins, which yet you have no disposition to renounce^f; but such as the Corinthians experienced under the remonstrances of St. Paul^g — — — O that

^c Isai. xl. 2. and lxi. 7. ^d Rom. ii. 4. ^e Amos iv. 6—12.

^f Ps. lxxviii. 34—37. ^g 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

in all these different exercises of mind, you may make it clear that your repentance is genuine, even "such a repentance as is never to be repented of!"

2. Delay it not—

[Many defer their repentance, under an idea that in a season of sickness or affliction they will find it more easy. But, in truth, the very reverse of this will be found more agreeable to fact and experience. Afflictions will not, of themselves, humble the soul: they will rather irritate and harden the soul of man; just as they wrought on the proud rebellious Pharaoh, and on the persons specified in my text^h. Ask of persons, when bowed down with pain or trouble, whether they find the same freedom of mind as in seasons of ease: and they will tell you, that they are rather impeded than aided, in their repentance, by the distractions which they suffer. Be ye then, brethren, careful to improve the present time. And if ye will really give glory to your God, in repenting of your sins, you need not fear but that he will receive you to mercy, and honour you as his accepted and peculiar people.]

^h See ver. 10, 11.

MMDXXI.

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES OF CHRIST.

Rev. xvii. 14. *These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

THE book of Revelation is confessedly dark and mysterious: yet there are many parts of it plain and perspicuous. The prophecy before us is not without its difficulties. We cannot doubt, however, but that it declares the downfall of popery. But we forbear to dwell on those parts which are difficult of interpretation: we confine our attention to what is most obvious in the text: in illustrating which we shall shew,

I. Who they are that war against the Lamb—

The text speaks of those who should oppose the cause of Christ, and the interests of his Gospel. Now this is done by,

1. Those who maintain sentiments contrary to the Gospel of Christ—

[A person may err with respect to subordinate matters, and yet have his heart, on the whole, right with God; but an error in the fundamental points argues a depraved state of mind. A man who denies the divinity of Christ, the sufficiency of his atonement, the influences of his Spirit upon the soul, or the necessity of an unreserved devotedness of heart to God, sets aside the whole Gospel; he therefore opposes Christ in his most essential interests, and wars against the Lamb^a.]

2. Those who endeavour to subvert his influence over his people's hearts—

[There is scarcely an unconverted person that does not, like Cain and Ishmael, revile and persecute the children of God: and how many does such treatment intimidate and subvert! Whatever then a scoffing world may think of their conduct, they are really fighting against Christ himself: in touching his people, they touch the apple of his eye^b.]

But we cannot doubt,

II. What will be the issue of the contest—

The enemies of Christ may appear to triumph for a while, but he will surely overcome them at the last.

Over some he will triumph by his grace—

[None are beyond the reach of his arm; none are so vile but that he feels compassion towards them; nor are any so stout-hearted but he is able to subdue them. He who vanquished the persecuting Saul, can and will make others also to be similar monuments of his grace and mercy.]

But those who reject all his overtures of mercy, he will break in pieces like a potter's vessel—

[His triumphs over them are admirably painted in the second Psalm; and he himself tells us what a sentence he will pass upon them in the day of judgment^c. However long their conflicts with him may be, this must at last be the termination of them.]

To impress this on our minds, let us consider,

III. What assurance we have that such shall be the issue of it—

^a Luke x. 16.

^b Acts ix. 4. Zech. ii. 8.

^c Luke xix. 27.

Two pledges of his victory are mentioned in the text:

1. His own power—

[Were he the first of created beings, his success might be uncertain; but he is Lord of lords, and King of kings." And though he is a Lamb, yet will he shew himself to be the "Lion of the tribe of Judah." Whoever shall presume to oppose him, he will go through them, and burn them up together^d.]

2. His people's constancy—

[They have not indeed, of themselves, any strength or constancy; but they have been "chosen" of God from before the foundation of the world^e. They have in due time been "called" by the effectual operation of his grace; and they are made "faithful" by him, so that nothing can induce them to desert his cause^f. The least and weakest among them all is more than conqueror through the strength of Christ^g; and all may adopt the language of triumph, even while conflicting on the field of battle^h—.]

APPLICATION—

1. Let us assist you in inquiring whether ye be among the friends or enemies of Christ—

[While some are against Christ, others "are with him:" they are with him in sentiment, in affection, in profession, in conduct. How great is the difference between those who in outward appearance are the same! O search and see whether ye be the friends or enemies of Christⁱ: according as you prove yourselves to be in this life, you will surely be found in the day of judgment.]

2. Let us address each of those characters—

[*To his enemies* we say, Consider whose enemies you are. Is this the treatment he has deserved at your hands? Is there not a time coming when he will fearfully resent it? If you be of the number of *his friends*, "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called^k." Let nothing, however pleasing, or however formidable, tempt you to forsake him. Be faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life^l.]

^d Isai. xxvii. 4.

^e Rom. viii. 37.

^k Eph. iv. 1.

^e Eph. i. 4.

^h Rom. viii.

^l Rev. ii. 10.

^f Acts xx. 20.

ⁱ Matt. xii. 30.

MMDXXII.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT, A GROUND OF JOY.

Rev. xix. 6. *Alleluia : for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*

IN the government of Jehovah all acquiesce, so far as relates to his conferring of rewards upon his obedient people : but from his inflicting of punishment on the disobedient the minds of the generality revolt ; because they have formed to themselves an idea of a God whose mercy swallows up, as it were, all his other attributes. But justice is, in its place, as honourable to the Deity as mercy : and the exercise of it, towards those who shall die in their sins, will be a subject of praise and thanksgiving through all the hosts of heaven, no less than the exercise of mercy itself. The whole preceding chapter proclaims the destruction of the mystical Babylon, that is, of Rome ; whose abominations have reached unto heaven^a, and whose persecutions of the saints have been long crying out for vengeance against her^b. At the execution of God's judgments upon her, all heaven is represented as rejoicing : and the one song which is heard through all the regions of the blest, is "Alleluia ! for true and righteous are God's judgments : for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia : and her smoke rose up for ever and ever^c." In this, all on earth are called to unite : and the entire chorus of the assembled universe is "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia ! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Connected with the ruin of antichrist is the diffusion of the Redeemer's kingdom throughout the world : for then will be the marriage of the Lamb, and his taking of the Church into a visible union with himself, and his consummation of her happiness. Then will the Lord

^a Rev. xviii. 5.

^b Rev. xviii. 24.

^c ver. 1—3.

God Omnipotent reign on earth; and nothing but hallelujahs be heard throughout the universe. Let me then call upon you, as it were by a voice from heaven, to commence this song,

I. As an expression of grateful acknowledgment—

Certain it is, that we have abundant ground for this song *in this present world*—

[Let us look back to the circumstances of *our birth*; the *time*, when the Sun of Righteousness had arisen upon the earth; and the *place*, where his rays were shining forth in their meridian splendour. This can be traced to nothing but God's sovereign will and pleasure: for it is to Him alone that we owe it, that we were not born amidst all the errors of Popish delusion; or in a heathen land, under the darkness of Pagan superstition, or of Mahometan imposture.

Let us survey *our whole life*; our dangers, both seen and unseen; and our deliverances, which nothing but an overruling Providence could ever have effected. Particularly, let us view our temptations to sin, and the wonderful preservations which we have experienced; sometimes, perhaps, through the remonstrances of conscience; sometimes through the intervention of some seasonable occurrence; and sometimes through a mere want of opportunity to execute the secret wishes of our hearts. Let us, in this respect, compare ourselves with those who, having been less favourably circumstanced in relation to their temptations and restraints, have been left to carry into effect the evil dictates of their hearts; and we shall, if we know any thing of ourselves, find abundant occasion for thanksgivings to our God.

If, through the grace of God, we have been brought to the knowledge of Christ, and been made partakers of his salvation, shall we not, in that case, pour forth our acclamations and hosannahs? Or, if we be yet in our unconverted state, shall we not praise him, that “space is yet given us for repentance?” If there were no other ground of praise than this, that we are not at this moment lifting up our eyes in the torments of hell, and crying in vain for a drop of water to cool our tongues, there is not one amongst us who may not well lift up his voice, even as thunder itself, in hallelujahs to the Lord God Omnipotent, who, by his sovereign power and grace, has distinguished us from the millions who are gone beyond a possibility of redemption.]

And shall we not burst forth into this song, the very instant that we enter into *the invisible world*—

[There we shall have a complete view of all the dangers to which we ever were exposed, and all the deliverances that ever

were vouchsafed unto us here below. Our feelings will be not unlike to those of Joshua and the Israelites after their establishment in the land of Canaan. They doubtless would look back on all their way, from the time that Moses had come to Egypt for their deliverance: they would call to remembrance the many successive plagues that had been inflicted on that land for the humiliation of Pharaoh, and the terrible slaughter of the first-born that had at last constrained him to consent: they would have strongly painted also before their eyes the dangers to which they had been exposed, when, with the sea before them, and mountains and morasses on either side, the enraged army of Pharaoh pressed upon their rear. They would, in particular, review their passing of the Red Sea as on dry ground, and the total destruction of their pursuers in the returning waters. In a word, they would have before their eyes the diversified events during the whole of their sojourning in the wilderness, the mercies and the judgments of every kind, till at last they were brought in safety to the possession of the promised land. Nor would they be unmindful of the myriads, who, through their unbelief, had fallen short of that rest; and of the distinguishing favours which they themselves had experienced at the hands of God. Thus, I say, will our souls, if ever they be permitted to reach the heavenly land, behold at one glance all the wonders of grace and mercy which they have experienced in this vale of tears: and, O with what rapture will they adore and magnify their God! Methinks the deafening sound of cataracts, or the terrific roar of thunders, will be as nothing, in comparison of the hallelujahs that shall burst from the millions of the redeemed at that day.]

But there is another view, in which the words of my text may be considered; namely,

II. As an effusion of confident anticipation—

This, indeed, is the precise view in which they should be understood; for Rome is not yet destroyed; and, consequently, the “alleluias” are uttered only in the prospect of that event. And we too, with a prospective regard to future events, may utter this song: we may utter it,

1. In reference to the world at large—

[Most awful is the state of the world at this time. Revolutions and counter-revolutions are occurring in mighty kingdoms, and in rapid succession: and no one can foresee what their end shall be. But it is a sweet consolatory thought, that God reigneth, and is accomplishing his own designs by these unconscious and unwitting agents. In the rise and fall

of the four great empires, God wrought his own sovereign and unerring will. Cyrus little thought whose instrument he was, in the subversion of the Chaldean empire; nor did the mighty conquerors, who, in succession, reduced the Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires, know whose decrees they executed, or whose purposes they fulfilled. So, at this time, contending nations little imagine that there is One on high who makes use of them for the effecting of his own purposes; and who will infallibly direct their ambitious and selfish projects for the attainment of his own ends. Nothing can appear more independent of the Deity than "winds and storms:" yet they, all of them without exception, "fulfil his will:" and truly this may well compose our minds, in relation to the issue of these events: and whilst others are filled with terrors, we may calmly and confidently say, "Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."]

2. In reference to the Church of God—

[This is at a low ebb. Whole countries, where religion once flourished, are now as destitute of it as if the Gospel had never been proclaimed unto them. Even the Churches of Asia, once so distinguished by the favour of Heaven, have their candlesticks removed, and are now immersed in total darkness. And Christendom itself is in a very dark degraded state; few, very few, experiencing the power of godliness, or adorning in any respect the principles they profess. But shall the light of divine truth be wholly extinguished, or the powers of darkness ultimately prevail against the Church of Christ? No: we are assured that "the gates of hell shall never prevail against it." Not all the efforts of God's enemies, therefore, need intimidate us, or partial failures tempt us to despond: for "God's counsel shall stand; and He will do all his will." God sees the impious conspiracies of the wicked; and he laughs them to scorn; saying, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion^d." And the time is surely coming, when "all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ:" so that, with as much confidence as if we saw this already actually existing, we may celebrate it with the loudest hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb.]

3. In reference to our own souls—

[Many discouragements do we meet with in our way; so that we are ready at times to say, like David, "I shall one day perish by the hands of my great enemy." But it is our privilege to know, that "God has laid help for us upon One that is mighty," and that "greater is He that is in us than he

^d Ps. ii. 1—6.

that is in the world." See the spirit of David, when replying to the boasts of the self-confident Goliath: such should be our spirit, in the midst of all our conflicts: nor should we doubt the issue of the contest, when we go forth in the name of the God of Israel, though we have nothing but a sling and a stone wherewith to oppose our mighty adversary. In a certain prospect of being "more than conquerors through Him that loveth us," we may adopt the language of the prophet, "The Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint; and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me: who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me: who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old, as a garment: the moth shall eat them up^e." Such was also the Apostle's boast^f—: and such also may be ours. "Let the floods lift up their waves ever so high, He who sitteth on high is mightier^g:" and therefore, in a certain dependence upon him, we may go on our way, assured of victory, and saying, "Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

See then, beloved, what GROUND we have in this passage,

1. For submission—

[There will doubtless be many untoward circumstances, which, at the time, will prove very afflictive to our minds. But we must never forget, that, however fortuitous they may appear, or with whatever hostile intention they may be contrived, they are all ordered by unerring wisdom and unbounded love: and, however bitter they may be, we should say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" We should remember, that, though "clouds and darkness may be round about him, righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne." Jacob's complaint, "All these things are against me," was far from being justified by the event: for the very events which he complained of, were the means ordained for the preservation of his whole family. Only bear in mind, that God rules on high; and then, whatever may occur, you will say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."]

2. For gratitude—

[See the hand of God in every thing; and your mouth will be ever filled with praise. What is painful, will be received as a token of his love; and what is pleasing, as a fruit of his favour. But, above all, the security which will be felt

^e Isai. i. 7—9.

^f Rom. viii. 34—39.

^g Ps. xciii. 1—4.

in the soul, and *that* in the midst of this tumultuous and ensnaring world—methinks, in the contemplation of this, a man's songs of praise should be as loud and constant as those in heaven. Dear brethren, think of this: nothing *is* done, which does not proceed from the hand of God: nor *shall* any thing be done, which shall not “work together for your good.” Rejoice then, and shout for joy: and let your Alleluias go forth unto your God day and night.]

3. For affiance—

[Put yourselves, and all your concerns, into the hands of your Almighty Friend: and fear not, though all the men on earth, and all the fiends in hell, should be confederate against you. If you cannot comprehend God's dealings with you now, be content; and say, “What I know not now, I shall know hereafter.” Wait, to “see the end of the Lord:” and if, like Job, you are afflicted now, expect that, like him, you shall ere long see reason to glorify your God for all his dispensations, however dark, however afflictive. Of this you may be assured, that they who wait on him shall find him ready to help; and “those who trust in him shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end.”]

MMDXXIII.

THE CHURCH'S UNION WITH CHRIST.

Rev. xix. 7, 8. *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*

THERE are some passages of Scripture which are particularly marked, as it were, by God himself, in order that we might be aware of their importance, and give to them the attention they deserve. The destruction of antichrist, and the establishment of Christ's universal kingdom, are here represented as already effected, and as being the subjects of most exalted joy to all the hosts of heaven. And that the Church of God in all ages might look forward with earnestness to these glorious events, St. John was ordered to write them in a book, and to declare with more than ordinary solemnity, that “they were the true sayings of God.”

Without entering too minutely into the figure by which the Church's connexion with Christ is here expressed, we will call your attention to,

I. The nuptials here announced—

The Bridegroom is our Lord Jesus Christ—

[In this view he is spoken of throughout the whole Scriptures. In the Old Testament by Isaiah^a, Ezekiel^b, Hosea^c, and by Solomon throughout the whole book of Canticles: and in the New Testament by John the Baptist^d, and John the Evangelist^e, and St. Paul^f, and by Christ himself^g.]

The bride is his Church both in her individual and collective capacity—

[Every soul at its first conversion is thus united to Christ, being made, not one flesh only, but also one spirit with him^h. Of the Corinthian Church individually did St. Paul say, “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christⁱ.”]

But it is of the whole Church more particularly that the Apostle speaks in my text. The whole world both of Jews and Gentiles shall in due season be united under one Head^k, and be prepared as a bride altogether fit for the heavenly Bridegroom. Doubtless it is the righteousness of Christ which alone can avail for her justification before God^l: but it is an inward righteousness of which my text speaks; and which constitutes the believer's *meetness*^m for this high honour. In the latter day shall all the people of the world be converted to God, and become “all righteousⁿ”; not so much as a single Canaanite being left in the land^o. Then shall all of them “be presented to him a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but be holy and without blemish^p.” This is the holy city that descends from God out of heaven, or in other words, this is “The Lamb's wife^q.”]

Let us next advert to,

II. The blessedness of the occasion—

To the bride it will be most blessed—

[Let every one look back and see from what a state his soul has been brought to a participation of this honour^r, and

^a Isai. liv. 5.

^b Ezek. xvi. 8.

^c Hos. ii. 19.

^d John iii. 29.

^e Rev. xxi. 2, 9.

^f Eph. v. 31, 32.

^g Matt. ix. 15. and xxii. 2.

^h Eph. v. 30. ¹ Cor. vi. 17.

ⁱ 2 Cor. xi. 2.

^k Eph. i. 10. ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι.

^l Dan. ix. 24. and Rom. iii. 22. and x. 4.

^m Col. i. 12.

ⁿ Isai. lx. 21.

^o Zech. xiv. 21.

^p Eph. v. 27.

^q Rev. xxi. 2, 9. before cited.

^r Ezek. xvi. 4—6.

to what dignity it is exalted: and can this be any thing but an occasion of joy? — — — Or let the state of the world at large be surveyed, and then let the change that shall be wrought in it be contemplated: verily the declarations of God respecting it appear utterly incredible. But thus it shall be. "All the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ;" and "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Well then may the whole creation be called on to exult with the saints, saying, "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel^s."

To the bridegroom himself it will be an occasion of all imaginable honour and glory—

[To his electing love will every soul ascribe the blessedness conferred upon him^t. Nay more, in this blessedness will every one see the fruit of redeeming love: "He loved the Church, and *gave himself for it*, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and present it to himself" in a state worthy of the relation which it has been ordained to sustain^u. To all eternity will there be but one song of praise amongst them all, "To him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen^x." How sweet their communion with him will be, or how rich their communications from him, I shall not attempt to describe. Suffice it to say, that, as he will be the only source of happiness to all, so will he be to them the one object of love and gratitude, of praise and thanksgiving.]

But here is matter for serious INQUIRY—

[All of us *hope* to partake of this honour and happiness: but are we all really *seeking* it? Have we *given up ourselves* to Christ? If not, how can we hope that He should *give up himself* to us? Are we preparing daily for that blessed occasion, "putting off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and putting on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness^y? If not, how can we think that he will acknowledge us in that near relation to him, the relation of a spouse? His spouse must be "all glorious within, and her clothing be of wrought gold^z," or she will create in his mind nothing but disgust. I pray you,

^s Isai. xliv. 23.

^t John xv. 16.

^u Eph. v. 26.

^x Rev. i. 5, 6.

^y Eph. iv. 22—24.

^z Ps. xlv. 13.

my dear brethren, deceive not your own selves. To surrender up yourselves entirely to him is nothing but your "reasonable service^a." It is nothing more than what we ourselves expect in forming such a relation with a creature like ourselves. And, if you have formed no such purposes, and adopted no such measures, it is in vain to imagine that your unwarrantable hopes shall ever be realized. If you have but begun to renounce all other lovers, and to set your affections on him alone, the very angels before the throne of God have rejoiced on your account^b. But, if you die before this devotion of yourselves to him has taken place, nothing remains to you to all eternity but "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Behold then, as the Apostle said to the whole Corinthian Church, so say I to you, I am at this moment desirous of "espousing you to one Husband, that I may present you, both in your individual and collective capacity, as a chaste virgin to Christ^c." O that my overtures may not be in vain! If you be but willing to accede to my proposals, in the name of the Most High God do I declare to you, that "as a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so will your God rejoice over you^d." Be not discouraged by the thought of past unfaithfulness: for he will not be extreme to mark what has been done amiss. He bids you to return to him with an assurance of forgiveness^e: and, if you henceforth "walk worthy of your high calling, he will acknowledge you as his before the whole assembled universe, and raise you to a full enjoyment of his presence and glory to all eternity^f.]

^a Rom. xii. 1.^b Luke xv. 10.^c 2 Cor. ii. 2.^d Isai. lxii. 5.^e Jer. iii. 1, 14.^f Zeph. iii. 17.

MMDXXIV.

THE MARRIAGE-SUPPER OF THE LAMB.

Rev. xix. 9. *Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

THE period referred to seems to be that of the millennium; preparatory to which, we are well assured, the popish power will be destroyed. That is the power which, in the book of Revelation, is designated the harlot, the whore of Babylon; and her destruction is that which is predicted in the preceding context. The frequent repetition of the word "Alleluia," (which is a Hebrew word,) in the

preceding verses, has given occasion to commentators to suppose, that the destruction of popery will, in a pre-eminent degree, attract the attention of *the Jews*, and dispose *them* to embrace the faith of Christ. However this may be, it will certainly be a signal to the world at large for their uniting themselves unto the Lord : and then will come what is here called “The marriage-supper of the Lamb;” and a very extraordinary degree of happiness will be poured out upon all the guests that are partakers of it,

Let us consider,

I. What is the feast here spoken of—

It is called, “The marriage-supper of the Lamb.” Now,

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Husband of his Church—

[This is frequently declared in the Holy Scriptures. The Prophet Isaiah says, “Thy Maker is thine husband^a,” and David enters very particularly into the subject, drawing a parallel between the union of men with their female captives, and the union which takes place between the Lord Jesus Christ and his believing people. The captive maidens were to be allowed a month to forget their friends and relatives. And thus believers are first taken captive by the power of the Lord Jesus; and then, having forgotten all former bonds, they are to be united unto him for ever^b. In the New Testament the same idea is frequently suggested. St. Paul speaks of believers being “presented as a chaste virgin to Christ^c,” and, in another place, after opening fully the duties of husbands and wives, he says, “I speak concerning Christ and his Church^d.”]

On occasion of his union with her, he gives a feast to all who shall accept his gracious invitations—

[The Church, *collectively*, is “the Lamb’s bride:” but *individual* believers are the guests invited to the marriage-feast. On the conversion of any soul, there is a joy diffused throughout all the angelic hosts^e: and, in like manner, the union of any soul with Christ should be regarded as a signal for joy amongst all who “love the Lord Jesus Christ in

^a Isai. liv. 5.

^b Isai. xlv. 10, 11.

^c 2 Cor. xi. 2.

^d Eph. v. 32.

^e Luke xv. 10.

sincerity." On every such occasion is there, as it were, a feast prepared; and guests are invited to partake of it. It is an occasion worthy of a feast: for then all the purposes of God respecting that soul are, in great measure, accomplished. As far as relates to that soul, the Redeemer himself receives the recompence of all that he has done and suffered for us; yea, "he sees of the travail of his own soul, and is satisfied." The soul was indeed "given unto Christ" from all eternity, and in that respect may be considered as "betrothed unto him." But, when the soul surrenders up itself to Christ, and is united unto him by faith, then does it "become one spirit with Christ^f," and partakes of all that Christ himself possesses. Now, if among men an union of any person with his bride is judged worthy of feasting and congratulation amongst all their friends, much more may the union before contemplated, even that of a believing soul and the Lord Jesus Christ, be fitly considered as a ground of most exalted joy.]

But that which the text speaks of, is not so much the feast, as,

II. The blessedness of all who partake of it—

Many reasons may be assigned why the guests at such a feast should be happy:

1. They have the felicity of seeing the Bridegroom, and of hearing his voice—

[St. John tells us how highly he himself esteemed this privilege: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled^g." And who can tell what it is to have such communion with him, unless he have first himself been admitted to it? Who but the believer can comprehend aright that declaration of St. John, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ^h?" Verily this is "a joy with which the stranger intermeddleth not;" it is "unspeakable and glorifiedⁱ;" even an earnest of heaven itself.]

2. They partake of the highest enjoyment of which, in this fallen state, their souls are capable—

[The terms in which the feast itself is described may give us some idea of this: it is "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the

^f 1 Cor. vi. 17.

^h 1 John i. 3.

^g John iii. 29.

ⁱ 1 Pet. i. 8.

lees well refined^k." But hear the testimony of a guest: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil: *my cup runneth over*^l." Hear another testimony: "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste. He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love^m." But why should we attend to individuals? However strongly they may express themselves, they can never convey to us any adequate idea of their bliss: for we are expressly told, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love himⁿ."]

3. The blessedness which they begin to taste on earth shall be perfected and continued to all eternity in heaven—

[There shall the table be spread again, and every believer be admitted to it. There are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, feasting before the Lord: there is Lazarus sitting next to Abraham himself: and there shall all true believers sit down with them: and the viands, of which they here obtained a taste, shall, with infinitely augmented zest, be partaken of by them to the full, through all eternity. But who shall paint the blessedness of that state? If even *here* the believer's joy is "unspeakable," what shall it *there* be? But we must be content to wait for our summons there: for, in attempting to describe that bliss, we only "darken counsel by words without knowledge."]

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are disposed to decline the invitation given them—

[You make excuses, which you now judge sufficient to justify your contempt of the mercy shewn you — — — But your "making light of it" is viewed with other eyes by the heavenly Bridegroom. He feels that you are offering to him the greatest indignity: and he declares, that "you shall never taste of his supper," but shall be for ever excluded from it, and be left in outer darkness to bewail your fate. O! who can declare what your feelings will then be? and what weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, will be your portion for evermore? Bring not on yourselves, my dear brethren, this awful judgment. I am sent, not only to invite, but to "*compel* you to come in." O that I knew how to address you, so that I might at last prevail! "Wherefore do you spend

^k Isai. xxv. 7.

^l Ps. xxiii. 5.

^m Cant. ii. 3, 4

ⁿ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good; and let your souls delight themselves in fatness^o."]

2. Those who are willing to accept it—

[Come without delay, lest the door should be closed, and your exclusion be for ever sealed. If you say, "I am afraid to come, because I do not possess a wedding-garment;" I answer, The Bridegroom himself has provided garments for all his guests; and if only you seek one from him, it shall not be withheld. Not only will he put upon you that justifying righteousness which he himself wrought out for you by his obedience unto death, but he will "make you all glorious within," and render you fully meet for the enjoyment of his presence, and the everlasting possession of his glory.

It may seem, perhaps, that we are speaking more than we are authorized to declare. But indeed it is not so: for "these are the true sayings of God," as my text informs you: and you shall find them true, if you will accept the invitation now sent you, and cast yourselves on him, in a firm reliance on his word. "Faithful is He that calleth you; who also will do it." Only come to him "strong in faith;" and you may rest assured that "not one good thing shall fail you, of all that he has ever promised."]

^o Isai. lv. 2.

MMDXXV.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS.

Rev. xix. 10. *The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

GOD is known by the works which he has made; on every one of which there is an impress of Omnipotence. Nor is his agency less visible in the suspension of the laws of nature (as they are called), than in the formation of them. Hence the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord were always appealed to as undeniable attestations to his character, and decisive evidences of his divine mission. There is yet a third mark of a divine interposition, which is not at all inferior to either of the former; I mean, the accomplishment of prophecy. In some respects this species of proof seems superior to the others, because

its weight is continually increasing; whilst that of creation is stationary; and that arising from miracles loses half its force, as soon as the spectators of those miracles are taken from us. On this account, perhaps, it is called “a *more sure* word of prophecy.” Certain it is, that God rests on this his exclusive claim to divine honour; and challenges the gods of the heathen to evince their title to divinity by one single proof of their prescience^a.

From this conviction, St. John fell at the feet of the angel who had revealed so many things to him, and began to render him that worship which was due from a creature to his Creator. But the angel undeceived him; and forbade him to execute his purpose; because he was only the servant and messenger of Jehovah, to whom alone such honour was due. “I am thy fellow-servant,” says he: “Worship God; for the testimony of Jesus,” which you have so copiously heard from me, is not mine, but is sent to thee by the Spirit of prophecy,” that is, by the Spirit of God, from whom alone all prophetic knowledge proceeds: he therefore, and he alone, is to receive any such tribute at thy hands.

This appears to be the scope and meaning of the words before us: in our further explanation of which we shall shew,

I. That to testify of Jesus is the great end of all prophecy—

The lines of prophecy are indeed exceeding various; yet do they all meet in one common centre, the Lord Jesus Christ^b. In some view or other, the application of prophecy to him will always be found just: it may respect him more immediately or more remotely; but *Him* it always does respect; and it presents us with a clear compendious view of,

1. His nature and character—

[It represents him as “Emmanuel, God with us,” even “the mighty God:” and at the same time informs us that he

^a Isai. xli. 23.

^b John i. 45. and Acts x. 42, 43. and John v. 39.

should be "a Child born, a Son given;" and that being born of a pure virgin, he should be "a man, Jehovah's fellow."

Such does it represent his *nature* to be, perfect God and perfect man; and his *character* it describes in all its parts. He was to be infinitely *holy*, "loving righteousness, and hating iniquity." His *wisdom* also was to be infinite; for he was to have "a spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and of might, of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and was to be quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord." He was to be *meek and lowly*, so as "not to break a bruised reed or quench the smoking flax;" and *tenderly compassionate*, "carrying the lambs in his bosom, and gently leading them that were with young." He was to be invincibly *patient* also, being, like "a lamb led to the slaughter, or sheep before her shearers, dumb:" he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. In short, he was to be "*fairer than ten thousand, and altogether lovely.*"

2. His work and offices—

[He was to be the "ever-living Redeemer," who should "give redemption to his people," and by the blood of his covenant should bring up his prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water." In order to execute this work, he was to be "*a Prophet* like unto Moses," who should "give light to the Gentiles" as Moses had done to the Jews, and "whose instructions the whole world at the peril of their souls must hear." He was also, as *a Priest*, to make, not beasts, but "his own soul, an offering for sin;" "to have our iniquities laid on him;" to be himself "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;" yea, "to be cut off, but not for himself;" and thus to "make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness." He was also to "make intercession for transgressors;" and by presenting himself before the mercy-seat as "the Lord our Righteousness," he was entirely to "make an end of sin," so that "in him all the seed of Israel might be justified and might glory." He was also, as *a King*, to be "set on God's holy hill of Zion;" and to be enthroned "at God's right hand, till all his enemies should be made his footstool." Whatever had before reduced his people to "captivity, he was to lead captive," and to reign over "a people rendered willing and obedient in the day of his power."]

3. His kingdom and glory—

[The rise and fall of other kingdoms are often the subjects of prophecy, but it is only because of their relation to the kingdom of Christ. The smallest things that relate to that are deemed of sufficient importance to occupy a very large

space; in the sacred writings, whilst the numberless events which appear great in our eyes are passed over without the least notice. But the truth is, that "Christ is all, and in all:" His kingdom alone is regarded by God; and nothing has any real importance but in proportion to the connexion which it has with that. The empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome are mentioned as successively to flourish for an appointed season; but that of Christ was afterwards to be established on the ruins of them all, and "to stand for ever:" "to Him should be given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: His dominion is to be an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

What we read of respecting the destruction of antichrist and all his adherents, is all with a view to the ultimate enlargement and universal establishment of the Messiah's empire, that "He may be King over all the earth, and that there may be one Lord, and his name one."]

Now these prophecies have been delivered in a variety of ways; but it is certain,

II. That that testimony, by whomsoever delivered, proceeds only from the Spirit of God—

The angel who instructed John, told him, that the testimony which he had given of Jesus proceeded from "the Spirit of prophecy." This is universally true. From him proceeds,

1. The revelation of it to the world—

[What was the substance of the prophetic declarations, St. Peter tells us; "The prophets testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." By whose agency also they were made known, he tells us;—it was "the Spirit of Christ:" and so far were the prophets from being the authors of their own report, that they were forced "to inquire and search diligently what the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." In another place, he extends this observation to all the prophets from the beginning of the world: "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Of the whole sacred volume also St. Paul affirms the same: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

What the motives were which induced God thus to reveal his purposes to men, we are at no loss to declare. He did it, first, to prepare the world for the reception of the Messiah; next, to point out that Messiah when he was to come, so that

no possibility of doubt could exist respecting him; and, lastly to make us know infallibly, that all which he has revealed respecting the ultimate state of the righteous and the wicked shall surely be fulfilled in its season.]

2. The manifestation of it to the souls of men—

[Man can no more apply the prophecies with power to his own soul, than he could have suggested them from his own mind. He must have a spiritual discernment given him before he can know the things of the Spirit^c. Could the prophecies alone have enlightened the mind of man, St. Paul, who was so conversant with them, would have been convinced by them. But he knew not Christ, till “it pleased God to reveal his Son *in* him,” and “to open his understanding to understand the Scriptures:” thus also was “the testimony of Christ confirmed by the Holy Spirit in” the Christians at Corinth^d. And in like manner the Holy Spirit still “testifies of Christ^e,” yea, it is his office to do so, even to “glorify Christ, by taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them unto us.” Without his agency, the external publication of the Gospel would have no effect: “Paul might plant, and Apollos water, to no purpose, unless God interposed to give the increase.”]

We may LEARN then from this subject,

1. *With what view* we should study the Scriptures—

[If the end of them all be to testify of Christ, then must we search them, in order to obtain or grow in the knowledge of Christ. It is of no use to amuse ourselves with studying the prophecies, unless we be led by them to believe in Christ, to put our trust in him as the only Saviour of the world, and to commit all our concerns to his wise and gracious disposal. All that has been accomplished, or is now accomplishing, or yet remains to be accomplished, must lead us to realize the thought of his superintending providence, and convince us that not one jot or tittle that he has spoken shall ever fail. Eternity shall give an infallible exposition of all that has been revealed, and every soul of man attest its truth.]

2. *In what manner* we should study them—

[We should study them not as the word of man, but as the word of God; we should study them with humble fervent prayer; we should beg that God would “open our eyes to see the wondrous things of his law,” and “give us *the spirit of wisdom and revelation* in the knowledge of Christ.” If we

^c 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12, 14.

^d 1 Cor. ii. 5, 6.

^e John xv. 26.

lean to our own understandings, we shall err: but if we seek the teaching of God's Spirit, "he will give us the anointing of the Holy One, that shall teach us all things;" he will shine into our hearts "to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "The meek he will guide in judgment, the meek he will teach his way."]

3. To whom we should give the glory, if we be savingly instructed by them—

[We cannot take it to ourselves, for "no man can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost." Nor are we to give it to the instrument, whether he be man or angel; for he is but an instrument, a servant of the living God. He may be, he ought to be, "esteemed very highly in honour for his work's sake;" but we must never rob God of his glory to give it to a creature. Is any of you disposed to idolize the creature? "See thou do it not." "Worship God," and God only; for the testimony which you have received concerning Jesus Christ is not our testimony, but God's: "the Spirit of prophecy" revealed it, and the "Spirit of prophecy" applied it to your hearts and consciences: to him therefore be ascribed exclusively, and at all times, the praise, the honour, and the glory for evermore.]

MMDXXVI.

CHRIST THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Rev. xix. 16. *He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

OF all the Apostles none seem to have been so highly favoured as John. While yet Jesus was on earth, John was characterized above all others as the Disciple whom Jesus loved; and, after his exaltation to heaven, John was preserved in the world many years longer than any other Apostle, and was honoured with a multitude of visions declarative of the state of the Church to the remotest period of time. The vision contained in the context foretels the destruction of antichrist in the latter days, and the consequent establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth. The person riding upon a white horse as a mighty Conqueror, is the Lord Jesus Christ himself; who is before described as having "eyes like a flame

of fire," and "a sharp sword going forth out of his mouth^a;" who is beyond all doubt "the word of God^b," and whose name is truly "Wonderful;" being incomprehensible to any except himself and his eternal Father^c. In noticing that part of the description which is contained in the text, there are two things to be considered :

I. The name by which he is called—

The august title which is here given to Christ denotes,

1. His universal dominion—

[The kings and lords of this world have only a limited sway: they rule over a certain tract of country and a certain portion of mankind, but they are independent of each other. But Jesus Christ rules over *them*: they are all his vassals, and more entirely subject to his will than the meanest of their servants are to theirs. There is not a principality or power in earth, or heaven, or hell, that is not altogether dependent upon him. He has "a name given him that is above every name^d;" "he is Heir and Lord of all^e;" "and he doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; nor can any stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou^f?"

It is true that there are many who are enemies to him, and rebels against his authority: but though they think to break his bands asunder and cast away his cords from them, he "has his hook in their nose and his bridle in their jaws," and says to them, as he does to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." They all unwittingly fulfil his will, even while they labour most to counteract it: and, when they seem most to prevail against him, they accomplish only his secret purposes^g.]

2. His proper Godhead—

[The name here given to Christ is that which belongs to

^a Compare ver. 12, 15. with Rev. i. 14, 16.

^b Compare ver. 13. with John i. 1, 14.

^c Compare ver. 12. with Isai. ix. 6. and Matt. xi. 27.

^d Phil. ii. 9—11. ^e Heb. i. 2. Rom. x. 36. ^f Dan. iv. 35.

^g Exod. ix. 16. Isai. x. 5—7, 15. His dominion over *his Church* in particular, might also be here opened, together with the manner in which he protects his people, and reigns in all their hearts. Eph. i. 20—23.

the one supreme God^h, and to him aloneⁱ — — — And well may it be given to him, since there is not any other name of the Deity which he does not bear^k — — — Nor any attribute which he does not possess^l — — — Nor any honour peculiar to the Deity, which he does not receive^m — — — We may be assured therefore that Jesus is not a mere subordinate King, but “ God over all, blessed for evermoreⁿ.”]

While the text proclaims his name, it leads us very particularly to notice,

II. The manner in which it is manifested—

Whether the inscription of his name upon “ his *vesture*” refer to any custom of that nature that obtained among great men or conquerors, we cannot say : but the inscription of it upon “ his thigh” must certainly mean that his name was written upon his sword, which hung upon his thigh^o. Of the general import of the passage we have no doubt : his “ *vesture dipped in blood*,” denoted his *past* victories^p, and his sword hanging upon his thigh, denoted his state of preparation for *future* triumphs ; the inscription therefore altogether means,

1. That he has manifested his power in his past victories—

[Jesus has already given abundant proofs of his almighty power and universal dominion. Look at Pharaoh and his hosts ; how vain was their opposition to him ; how signal and complete their ruin ! Behold the seven nations of Canaan ; how they melted before him as snow before the meridian sun ! See his once highly favoured people the Jews ; how he has verified his word towards them, “ wiping Jerusalem as a dish, and turning it upside down^q.” Look at all his enemies in every age ; Have they prevailed ? Is not His cause still triumphant ? and have not multitudes of his enemies already been made his footstool ? Yes, not Julian only (the apostate), but thousands and tens of thousands have been forced to acknowledge the power of Jesus, and, with the affrighted Bethshemites, to cry,

^h Deut. x. 17.

ⁱ 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.

^k Isai. xl. 3. with Mark i. 1—3. *The mighty God*. Isai. ix. 6.

^l *Eternity*, Mic. v. 2. *Omnipresence*, Matt. xxviii. 20. *Omniscience*, John xxi. 17. *Omnipotence*, Matt. xxviii. 18.

^m Acts vii. 59. John xiv. 1. John v. 23.

ⁿ Rom. ix. 5.

^o Ps. xlv. 3. ^p Isai. lxiii. 1—4.

^q 2 Kings xxi. 13.

“Who shall stand before this holy Lord God^r?” If then the “Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth^s,” our blessed Saviour has made known in this very way his eternal power and Godhead.]

2. That he will manifest it in his future victories—

[There is a time coming when Jesus shall put forth his almighty power, and “subdue all nations to the obedience of faith.” In the words following our text, he declares how extensive shall be his victories, and that all who oppose him shall be as tow before the fire. His victories *here* will be easy, certain, terrible^t. But what if we look into the eternal world? O what proofs shall we *there* see of his irresistible, almighty power^u! Let us be assured of this, that, though we be kings and lords, we must become his subjects; and that, if we will not bow to the sceptre of his grace, “we shall be broken in pieces, as a potter’s vessel.”]

INFER—

1. How deeply are we concerned to know whether Christ be our King!

[We must not imagine that he is our King, merely because we *profess* ourselves his subjects. We must inquire, Whether we have been translated from the kingdom of Satan, and brought as strangers into the kingdom of Christ^x? We must also inquire, Whether we are living in obedience to him? For there is nothing more certain, than that “his servants and subjects we are to whom we obey^y.” If we are not *his*, there can be no doubt whose we are: and therefore we should labour to ascertain the point, and to have our evidence clear that “we are Christ’s.”]

2. How awful will it be to be found amongst his enemies!

[“We may be sure, whoever we are, that he will overcome at last:” his name is a pledge of universal conquest^z. And how terrible will be the wrath of THE LAMB^a! O let us kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and we perish from the way^b.]

3. How secure are all his faithful subjects!

[Other kings may be subdued; but He never can: other kings may bring the heaviest calamities upon their subjects;

^r 1 Sam. vi. 20.

^s Ps. ix. 16.

^t Isai. xxv. 10, 11. Ps. vii. 11—13. Deut. xxxii. 41, 42.

^u Ps. xi. 6. and xxi. 8, 9.

^x Col. i. 13.

^y Rom. vi. 16. John xv. 14.

^z Rev. xvii. 14. Luke xix. 27.

^a Rev. vi. 16.

^b Ps. ii. 12.

He will bring nothing to them but peace and joy. "None can harm us, if we be his followers." "If He be for us, none can be effectually against us." "Let the children of Zion therefore be joyful in their King^c:" yea, to all his subjects we will say, with David, "The Lord is King over all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding^d."]

^c Ps. cxlix. 2.

^d Ps. xlvii. 7.

MMDXXVII.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

Rev. xx. 6. *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.*

RESPECTING the events spoken of in my text, and which are generally known under the name of *the Millennium*, commentators have been greatly divided. What has been spoken on the subject by wild enthusiasts, I shall pass over without notice: but the two leading opinions of pious and judicious men may fitly come under our review. Some have thought that there will really be a resurrection of saints and martyrs, who shall again live upon the earth a thousand years, and that the Lord Jesus Christ also will come down from heaven to reign over them during that period. Others conceive the resurrection to be altogether figurative, and that it imports no more, than that for the space of a thousand years there will arise a succession of holy men, resembling the saints and martyrs of former ages: and that the spiritual kingdom of Christ will for that period be established upon the face of the whole earth. I confess that, in my opinion, this latter sentiment is by far the more just and scriptural; and, feeling that persuasion, I will endeavour to shew you,

I. What we are to understand by the first resurrection—

The whole of the book of Revelation is confessedly mystical and figurative; and, if we interpret this passage in a *literal* sense, we make it essentially to

differ from every other part. In confirmation of the view which I have of the first resurrection, as being not a literal, but only a mystical and figurative, resurrection, I would observe,

1. That the words do not by any means of necessity require to be taken in a *literal* sense—

[It is well known that a *spiritual* change is often spoken of in the Scriptures as a resurrection from the dead: we are said to be quickened when “dead in trespasses and sins;” and to have “passed thereby from death unto life^a.” In several places, where the terms are quite as strong, or even stronger than those in the text, no one ever thought of putting a *literal* interpretation. When the Prophet Hosea says, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up: after two days will he revive us, in the third day *he will raise us up*, and we shall live in his sight^b,” every one understands him as speaking of a *spiritual* resurrection. The language used by the Prophet Ezekiel is yet more to our purpose. He represents the Jewish nation as not only dead, but as so long dead, that their very bones are scattered on the earth, and almost pulverized. And he speaks of their bones being re-united, each to its kindred bones, and the whole covered with flesh, and every body animated again by a living spirit which has entered into them, and restored them to life^c. But did ever any one understand him as speaking of a *literal* resurrection?

It may be said, that, in our text, particular persons are specified, even those who have died as martyrs in the cause of Christ, and that therefore the text must be literally applied to *them*. I answer, that it is not of them *personally* that the Apostle speaks, but of *persons resembling them in mind and spirit*; just as Elijah is said to have come to introduce the Messiah, because John the Baptist “came in the spirit and power of Elias^d.” And, if we make *their* resurrection *personal*, we must then regard the resurrection of *the wicked* also as *personal*, of whom it is said, that, “when the thousand years shall be finished, the rest of the dead will live again^e.” But did ever any one suppose that *the wicked* would rise to live on earth again? Yet, if the *pious* dead, who have been slain by the sword of martyrdom, are *literally* to rise and reign on earth a thousand years, the ungodly dead, who have been

^a Eph. ii. 1. 1 John iii. 14.

^b Hos. vi. 1, 2.

^c Ezek. xxxvii. 1—10.

^d Compare Mal. iv. 5. with Matt. xi. 14. and xvii. 12. and Luke i. 17.

^e ver. 5.

slain by the avenging sword of the Almighty, must literally, and in their own persons, rise at the expiration of that time^f.

But shall any, whether the risen martyrs, or others resembling them, live, and reign "a thousand years?" No: there is no reason to think that their lives shall be protracted to any such length: but there shall be a succession of saints during that period: and as that succession will be uninterrupted through that whole time, they are said to live through that time; because, though they do not *personally* live, their piety does live, and is transmitted unimpaired through all the successive generations that shall arise. It is in this sense that the two witnesses who prophesy in sackcloth, are said to "prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore prophetic days, (or years)g." It relates not to *their persons*, but to *others* rising in continued succession *in their spirit*, to bear the same testimony. Indeed of them also is it said, that "they were overcome by their enemies and killed; and that their death caused exceeding great joy; but that, after three days (years) and an half, to the utter dismay of their enemies, they rose and lived againh." But no one ever imagined, that this was fulfilled literally; every one understands this of a succession of prophets who arose to bear the same testimony as they had borne who had suffered martyrdom for their fidelity: and in the same manner must the resurrection of the saints also, and their reigning for a thousand years, be understood of a continued succession of eminently pious persons reigning with Christ over all the enemies of their salvation; whilst *the ungodly shall have no successors till the expiration of that time*.

In any other sense than this, it would be extremely difficult to make this passage agree with what is spoken of the resurrection in other parts of Scripture; for the resurrection is always represented as taking place all at once, except that the godly will rise first, before those who shall then be alive upon the earth shall be changedⁱ: but in the sense we have annexed to it, it accords exactly with the language of St. Paul, when he says, "If the casting away of the Jews be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but

^f The *οἱ λοιποὶ* in ver. 5. are the same persons with *οἱ λοιποὶ* in Rev. xix. 21; and they, beyond all doubt, are spoken of *symbolically*, as designating, *not individual persons*, but *persons of their spirit and character*. This shews that we must understand ver. 4. also, *not in a literal*, but in a *symbolical* sense, as designating *persons who resemble the martyrs of old time*. *The same mode of explication must apply to both*; if the one be taken *literally*, so must the other be. Both must be *literal*, or both *symbolical*. And this quite, as it appears to me, determines the point at issue.

^g Rev. xi. 3.

^h Rev. xi. 7, 10, 11.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xv. 51—53. 1 Thess. iv. 15—17.

life from the dead^k?" If it be thought, that this similarity of metaphor will occasion confusion in the sense, let it be remembered, that our blessed Lord used the very same terms to express the conversion of souls to him *now*, and their rising again to judgment *in the last day*: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when *the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live* Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which *all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth*; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation^l." Here our Lord distinguishes the two resurrections, both effected by his almighty power; the one upon the souls of men, and the other on their bodies: the one in order to their reigning with him on earth, (for "they are made kings and priests unto God;") and the other, in order to their reigning with him in glory.

Thus the very terms themselves are best explained in reference to a spiritual resurrection; whilst, if taken in a *literal* sense, they would establish a doctrine not found in any other part of Holy Writ. To all of which I may add, that the text speaks only of their *souls* living, which is never once in all the Scriptures used to designate the resurrection of *the body*.

In confirmation of the foregoing statement, I proceed to observe,]

2. That the event which a literal sense of them would establish, is neither probable nor desirable—

[One cannot conceive that the saints in glory should be brought down from heaven, where their happiness is complete and without alloy, and be placed again in a situation where they must be encompassed with infirmities, and be subjected even to death itself; or that the Saviour should leave his bright abodes, to sojourn here again in a tabernacle of clay for the space of a thousand years. If indeed he had plainly declared such an event, we should most readily submit to his all-wise determinations, and should expect assuredly that he would ultimately be glorified by it: but, when there is no other passage of Scripture that sanctions such an idea; and all similar expressions have confessedly a spiritual import; and the spiritual or figurative sense accords with innumerable other declarations of Holy Writ; I cannot hesitate about the true interpretation of the words, or about the expectations which they teach me to form respecting the glory of the latter day.

In this view of the passage I am confirmed by the circumstances which will take place at the close of the Millennium:

^k Rom. xi. 15.

^l John v. 25, 28, 29.

“Satan will then be loosed out of his prison, and will go forth to deceive the nations, and to gather them together to battle, the number of whom will be as the sand of the sea. And with these he will compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire will come down from God out of heaven to devour them^m.” Now all this I can understand, on the supposition that there be a succession of saints for a thousand years; because I can easily conceive that hypocrites and apostates may at last arise from among them, just as they did from among the immediate converts of the Apostles: but I cannot possibly conceive, either that Satan should so prevail over saints that are brought down from heaven, as to occasion them at last to be cut off by fire from heaven; or that, though preserved faithful to their God, they should ever be subjected to such assaults from men and devils. We are told expressly, that “the sun shall not light on them, nor any heat,” and that “they shall have no more sorrow, or crying, or pain:” and therefore I cannot but conclude, that they shall be with Christ in Paradise, till they shall come forth at the last day to be reunited to their bodies, and to possess both in body and soul the inheritance provided for them from the foundation of the world.]

With such a view of the first resurrection, we are prepared to contemplate,

II. The blessedness of those that shall have a part in it—

“Blessed and holy” will they all be; and *that* too in a pre-eminent degree above the saints of other ages:

1. Their views will be more enlarged—

[Our light far surpasses that of the prophets: insomuch that the least and meanest of the saints under the Christian dispensation excels in that respect even the Baptist himself, who was greater than all the prophets: and amongst ourselves, some have far deeper and richer views of divine truth than others. But in that day, the great mystery of redemption will be exhibited in far brighter colours than it has yet been. Not that any fresh revelation will be vouchsafed to men; for I conceive that the canon of Scripture is closed: but there will be a more abundant measure of the Spirit poured out upon them, revealing to them the Saviour, in all “the brightness of his glory,” and in “the incomprehensible wonders of his love:” “the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day

^m ver. 7—9.

that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their woundⁿ."]

2. Their graces will be more vigorous—

[They will be "*blessed and holy*;" and blessed, *because* holy. This indeed will be a necessary consequence of the foregoing; for the more "any man beholds the Saviour's glory, the more will he be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of our God^o." The whole vineyard of the Lord will *then* be watered more abundantly; and such "showers of blessings" will be poured out upon it, that every plant in it will grow, and "be fruitful in all the fruits of righteousness, to the praise and glory of our God." We may form some idea of their state from what is recorded of the saints on the day of Pentecost: what exalted piety did they manifest towards both God and man! So will it be also in that day: "for brass they will have gold, and for iron silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron^p:" and that prayer of the Apostle will in a more ample measure be answered to them; "The God of peace, that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, will make them perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ^q."]

3. Their consolations more abundant—

[As their communications from God will be increased, so will their fellowship with him be more intimate and abiding. Their communion with each other also will be most profitable and endearing. Wherever they turn their eyes, they will behold a brother, or a sister, a partaker of the same faith, an heir of the same glory. If even now the communion of the saints be so sweet, that it is almost a foretaste of heaven itself, what will it be in that day, when the loveliness of each, and the disposition of all to exercise the principle of love, will be so greatly augmented? And what will the ordinances be in that day? What, but "the very gate of heaven?" Methinks, the pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit will then be a daily occurrence; and the language of earth be like that of heaven, one continued effusion of praise and thanksgiving. The descriptions given of that period in the Scriptures are precisely similar to those which are given of heaven itself; because the state of the Church then will be an emblem, and an earnest of heaven. So happy will they be in their intercourse with God, that "the sun will be no more their light by day, neither for brightness will the moon give light unto them; but the Lord

ⁿ Isai. xxx. 26.

^o 2 Cor. iii. 18.

^p Isai. lx. 17.

^q Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

will be unto them an everlasting light, and their God their glory^r.”]

4. Their progress more easy—

[“Satan will then be bound, and sealed up in the bottomless pit, so that he can have no access to harass and deceive them^s.” Now it is well known, that this subtle enemy presents more formidable obstacles in the Christian’s way than all other enemies together; as the Apostle says, “We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places^t.” How rapid then will be the progress of those who have not this tide to stem, and at the same time are carried forward by breezes the most favourable that heaven can bestow, and amply sufficient to fill all their sails! To this subject we may well apply that beautiful description which the Prophet Amos has given of that period; “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop wine, and all the hills shall melt^u.” for in a spiritual, as well as temporal view, so fruitful shall be the seasons, that the blessings of heaven shall almost supersede the labours of cultivation. And all who are bending their course heavenward will fly with the celerity of “doves to their windows,” and without interruption, as the clouds of heaven^x.]

5. Their prospects more glorious—

[Breathing thus, as they will do, the atmosphere of heaven, they will be ever ready to take their flight, and to wing their way to their celestial abodes. From the top of Pisgah they will view their promised inheritance: and when the Lord Jesus says, “Behold, I come quickly,” the united cry of all will be, “Amen: even so, come Lord Jesus^y.” In a word, their whole spirit and deportment will evince the presence, and *the reign, of Christ* in all their souls.]

APPLICATION—

But may not this period be anticipated? May we not at least have the commencement of it amongst ourselves? Yes, surely we may. We may assuredly enjoy the dawn of that light, which they will behold in its meridian splendour. With a view to assist you in the noble enterprise of forestalling and anticipating that blessed day, I would say,

^r Compare Isai. lx. 19. with Rev. xxi. 23. and xxii. 5.

^s ver. 2, 3.

^t Eph. vi. 12.

^u Amos ix. 13.

^x Isai. lx. 8.

^y Rev. xxii. 7, 20.

1. Improve the privileges which you do enjoy—

[These, let me say, are equal to any that have been enjoyed since the apostolic age: for the light of the Gospel shines with a splendour unknown to former ages, and is diffusing its rays to an extent which but a few years ago no human being could have contemplated. Satan indeed exerts his utmost efforts to obstruct the progress of divine truth; but he cannot succeed: he is foiled in almost every attempt; and his kingdom trembles to its centre. I need go no farther than to you, my brethren, in proof of what I have asserted. You see how the Lord Jesus Christ is extending his empire, amongst yourselves, as well as in the world at large: and therefore you have every encouragement to fight under his banners, and to expect a successful issue of your warfare. It is worthy of observation, that the saints of the millennial period have no distinction above you, except that “they shall reign a thousand years;” for over *you* “the second death shall have no power,” any more than over *them*: and *you*, as well as *they*, are “priests of God and of Christ^z.” Improve then, I say, your privileges, and seek to attain the graces that will distinguish them: they are characterized by their freedom from the pollutions of the world, and by the fidelity of their adherence to Christ^a. “Be ye then faithful unto death; and know assuredly that God will give you the crown of life.”]

2. Look forward to a still better resurrection—

[We are ready to envy the millennial saints: but think how much more glorious a resurrection awaits you, than can possibly be enjoyed by embodied souls on earth! *They* will of necessity be subject to infirmities, even in their best estate: but in a little time *you* shall be as free from all infirmity as the angels around the throne of God: your souls shall be altogether perfected after the Divine image, and “your bodies be made like unto Christ’s glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself^b.” Then “shall you be ever with the Lord,” and possess in all its fulness the complete fruition of your God. Look forward with joy to that blissful period; and in the mean time, “Comfort ye one another with these words^c—.”]

^z Compare ver. 6. with 1 Pet. ii. 9.

^b Phil. iii. 20, 21.

^a ver. 4.

^c 1 Thess. iv. 17, 18.

MMDXXVIII.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

Rev. xx. 11—15. *I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

WE are not to imagine that the mysterious parts of Scripture are unworthy of our most attentive perusal: for though we should not succeed in our endeavours to comprehend all that is contained in them, we shall find much that is plain, intelligible, and important. The chapter before us speaks of a resurrection of all the martyred saints to reign with Christ on earth a thousand years: it informs us also that, at the expiration of that period, Satan shall be loosed from his confinement, and prevail against them, deceiving many, and destroying many. It tells us moreover, that God, determining to execute vengeance on that deceiver of the nations, and on such ministers as have been his instruments, and upon all those who have been deceived by them, will then come to judge the world in righteousness.

We apprehend this reign of Christ on earth, though not improbably attended with occasional manifestations of himself as on Mount Tabor, will be chiefly figurative: but, without dwelling on the points that are of difficult interpretation, and which events alone will with certainty explain, let us attend to the instruction here given us respecting that in which we are all so deeply interested, the solemnities of the day of judgment. In these we may notice,

I. The appearance of the Judge—

[Christ is the person who shall judge the world^a: and he is here, as elsewhere on the very same occasion^b, declared to be “God,” as well as man, Emmanuel, God with us. His being seated on a “throne” denotes, that from his decisions there will be no appeal, but that, sanctioned as they will be by the authority of the King of kings, they will be final and irreversible. Nor is it without design that the throne is described as “white,” seeing that it will exceed the meridian sun in brightness, nor ever be sullied by the smallest instance of partiality or error.]

The idea of “earth and the heavens that surround it, fleeing from before his face, and no place being found for them,” is calculated to impress our minds with the most awful sense of his majesty and glory. This guilty globe was once the place of his residence, till its impious inhabitants rose up against him with one consent, and put him to death. But in that day, as though it was conscious of its own desert, it will flee from his presence; nor will any place be found for this theatre of sin to exist any longer in its present polluted state^c.]

II. The persons that shall be summoned to his tribunal—

[Not only at the deluge, when the whole world was drowned, but since that time, millions, who, for mercantile or hostile purposes, have traversed the mighty waters, have found their graves in the bosom of the ocean. But at the last day, “the sea shall give them up;” “death” also shall surrender up the bodies that have long since mouldered into dust, and “hades,” or the invisible world, shall deliver up the souls that have long abode in happiness or misery. All who have ever lived upon the earth, whether “small or great, shall stand before the tribunal of their God.” The God that formed them out of nothing will collect with ease their scattered atoms, and reunite them to their kindred souls. Every one shall appear in his own proper body, nor shall he be able either to withstand the summons, or elude the search. The king and the beggar, the sage philosopher and the child that died ere it saw the light, shall be no otherwise distinguished, than as they are classed with the righteous or the wicked.]

III. The rule of judgment—

[Various “books shall then be opened” to serve as grounds of the Divine procedure^d. *The book of God’s law*, originally inscribed on the hearts of our First Parents, and still not wholly

^a Acts xvii. 31. John v. 22.

^c 2 Pet. iii. 10.

^b Rom. xiv. 10—12.

^d Dan. vii. 9, 10.

effaced even from the minds of heathens, will be the rule by which they shall be judged, who never saw the light of revelation^e. *The book of the Gospel*, wherein the mysteries of redemption are unfolded to our view, will be the touchstone by which *our* faith and practice shall be tried. *The book of conscience* too, which now omits many things, or grossly misrepresents them, will then give a juster testimony to our conduct: for then it will be a perfect transcript of another book that shall be opened, namely, *the book of God's remembrance*. In *this*, every action, word, and thought, was faithfully recorded by the unerring hand of God himself: and every purpose, desire, or motive, shall have an influence on his decision to enhance our happiness or augment our misery^f.

There is yet another book, particularly specified in the text, "*the book of life*." This is none other than the book of God's decrees, wherein were written from the foundation of the world the names of his elect. And as the other books will be opened in order to vindicate the equity of his decisions, so will *this*, in order to display the sovereignty of his grace. *Twice* is this book mentioned in the text; but *twice* also is it declared, that all "shall be judged *according to their works*:" while therefore we honour God's electing love, we must carefully dismiss every thought that may disparage his remunerative justice. Though to God's election the saints will be indebted for their salvation; the wicked will never perish through any influence of reprobation: their happiness men will owe *to him*; their misery *to themselves* alone.]

IV. The sentence that shall be executed—

[Nothing is expressly mentioned in the text respecting the sentence of the righteous; though it is evidently implied, that they, having their names written in the book of life, shall have a very different end from that of the ungodly. Yes; to them there is no condemnation; they shall never perish, but shall have eternal life^g. If indeed God should judge them by the strict tenour of his law, they must perish: but he views them as clothed in the Redeemer's righteousness; and accepts, *for his sake*, not their persons only, but their services, treasuring up their tears in his vial, and noticing their very desires in order to a future recompence^h.

As for those whose names are not written in the book of life, their state will be inexpressibly awful. They, together with "death and hell," the present receptacles of the damned, shall be "cast into the lake of fire;" in order that, except in that place, there may not remain any vestige of sin or misery

^e Rom. ii. 14, 15.

^f 1 Cor. iv. 5.

^g Rom. viii. 1. John x. 27, 28.

^h Mal. iii. 16, 17.

in the whole creation. This is emphatically called “the second death.” The pangs of dissolution are often great, and the consequent separation of soul and body very distressing: but the anguish attendant upon these is a very faint emblem of the torments that shall be endured in that state of separation from God, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Nor will the ungodly have any just reason to complain that their names were not written in the book of life, since they never desired to be there registered, nor ever regarded the Lamb of God, who alone could inscribe their names therein.]

INFER—

1. How needful is it to secure an interest in Christ!

[We all are hastening to his judgment-seat; nor will and thing avail us there but an interest in his blood and righteousness — — — By the law we are all condemned; but by the Gospel we may all have life — — — Let us then not waste all our time in seeking the things that perish with the using; but rather secure an inheritance that shall never fade, and that shall continue when all earthly things shall be dissolved.]

2. How carefully should the professors of religion take heed to their ways!

[All must be judged according to their works, the quantity of which as well as the quality, will make an essential difference in our stateⁱ. Every hour, as it passes, wings its way to heaven, and records the manner in which it was spent. We are, in fact, dictating daily our own sentence, and determining the measure of our own happiness or misery. Let us then frequently ask ourselves, what the last hour has recorded respecting us; and whether we shall be glad to see the transactions of it brought forth as evidences at the bar of judgment? God help us to bear this in mind; and so to pass our few remaining hours, as we shall wish we had passed them, when we shall be standing naked before his tribunal!]

ⁱ Gal. vi. 8. 2 Cor. ix. 6.

MMDXXIX.

THE HEAVENLY GLORY.

Rev. xxi. 1—6. *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a*

great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done.

THIS passage is supposed by some to refer to the millennial period. And it is certain that that period is elsewhere spoken of under the image of new heavens, and a new earth^a. But others interpret it as relating to the eternal world; which sense accords best both with the text and context. Of the millennial era, it cannot be said that then "all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes, and that there shall be no more death;" for most distressing times will follow it; and, after it, death will proceed in its work of desolation with uninterrupted sway. Moreover, as the state of the wicked in the day of judgment is spoken of in the preceding context, it is reasonable to suppose that the state of the righteous should be mentioned also; whilst, if it be not adverted to in this passage, it is omitted altogether, notwithstanding this book of revelation was intended to make known the future destinies of the Church, as well as of the world, to all eternity. Understanding therefore the vision as relating to the eternal world^b,

I will proceed to consider,

I. The vision itself—

The Apostle saw "a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth having passed

^a Isai. lxx. 17. and lxxvi. 22.

^b Yet, as the words used by the Prophet most unquestionably relate to the millennial state, they may be so interpreted here. Perhaps the one being typical of the other, as the redemption from Babylon of our redemption by Christ, the words may be interpreted of either, as circumstances may require. Accordingly the Author has so applied them in his Discourse on Isai. lxx. 17, 18.

away: and, in that new creation, there was no more sea;” all storms and tempests having ceased, and all occasions for tumultuous agitations having for ever vanished.

He saw also the holy city, new Jerusalem, that is, a model of it, “coming down from God out of heaven:” and this city was in all respects fitted for the habitation of the most high God in the midst of all his redeemed people; “its foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones;” “its walls great and high,” “its gates of pearl,” “its streets of pure gold;” and “God himself and the Lamb enlightening it with their glory^c.” In a word, it was fully “prepared for its glorious inhabitants, as a bride adorned for her husband.”

This vision seems to have been somewhat of the same kind with that which had formerly been given to Peter, when “a great sheet, filled with all manner of living animals, descended to him from heaven^d.” But together with it “he heard a great voice out of heaven,” proclaiming to him the blessedness of those who should inhabit that holy city. And this calls for our more particular attention.

We see here,

1. The source of that bliss—

[God dwelt, by a visible symbol of his presence, in his tabernacle and temple of old. He was in a peculiar manner the God of Israel; and they were in a peculiar manner his people. In his Church, and amongst his true Israel, he dwells also at this time; manifesting himself to them as he does not unto the world; and communicating to them a fulness of all spiritual blessings. And as by this glorious distinction his people of old were elevated above the heathen, so are his spiritual Israel now distinguished above all other people upon the face of the earth; possessing a knowledge of God’s will, an enjoyment of his presence, a sense of his love, and an experience of his power, which no other creature out of heaven does, or can possess.

But in heaven God displays all the full radiance of his glory. He is seen there, not in a mere symbol, like the bright cloud, nor through the dim vision of faith; but clearly, as with our

^c ver. 10—23.

^d Acts x. 9—16.

bodily organs we behold the sun in the firmament. Nor are his communications there any longer partial, scanty, and occasional; but constant and full, according to the measure of every one's capacity to receive them.

The consciousness which every one will then have of his interest in God; of the relation which he bears to him; and of the indissolubleness of that bond which has united him to God; O! what a source of joy will this be! But on a subject like this, "we only darken counsel by words without knowledge." We have no conception of the presence of God. A new-born infant is not less capable of appreciating the sublime exercises and enjoyments of spiritual perception, than we are of comprehending the felicity of beholding God face to face.]

2. The perfection of it—

[The *negative* felicity of heaven comes more within the grasp of our feeble minds. We know here, by sad experience, what pain and sorrow mean: and frequent are the occasions on which tears flow down our cheeks. Death too, that king of terrors, warns us of the pains which we shall speedily endure in our conflicts with him. This whole world is little else than a vale of tears. At best it is a checquered scene, and sorrows are continually intermingled with our joys. But in heaven there will be no more pain, or sorrow, or crying: our happiness will be uninterrupted, and without alloy. Nor will there be any termination of it; for "there will be no more death." Whatever tears bedewed our cheeks in our departing hours, they will all be wiped away by God himself; who will, from the instant of our entrance into his presence, seat us on his throne, and put a crown of pure gold upon our head, and invest us with all the glory and felicity of his kingdom. When joy and gladness have thus taken possession of our souls, not only will "sorrow and sighing flee away," but all occasion for them, all scope for the exercise of them, will vanish for ever. O beloved, what a state will this be! Would to God we were able to speak of it as we ought! But we feel the subject far too great for our feeble grasp.]

Lest this vision should appear to exceed what will ever be realized, let me draw your attention to,

II. The confirmation of it—

"God, in giving us his covenant, confirmed it with an oath, in order that we might have the stronger consolation:" so here, he confirmed this vision to the Apostle by an audible voice, declaring that the things which he had seen,

1. Were really true—

[“Behold, I make all things new. Write; for these words are true and faithful.” God would have this vision recorded for the benefit of the Church: nor would he have any part of it doubted: for every thing which had been spoken respecting it was true, and might be fully relied on.

Now this at first sight appears to have been superfluous: but it was in reality no more than what our necessities required. When the soul is bowed down with pains and sorrows, it needs support: and there is no support equal to that which this vision affords. Our trials are but for a time: and eternity is near at hand: and the very troubles which we are called to endure, are subservient to our best interests, and conducive to the augmentation of our happiness to all eternity. Look at the saints of old, and see what supported them in all their trials. What enabled the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to leave their country and kindred, and to live as pilgrims and sojourners on the earth? “They looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God^e.” What enabled the martyrs of following ages to sustain their accumulated afflictions? They “looked forward to the resurrection,” when they should possess “a better and an enduring substance^f.” It is to that period that our blessed Lord teaches us to look, as affording us a rich compensation for all that we can now endure for his sake^g. And it is the prospect of that time which reconciles all the Lord’s people to the diversified afflictions of this present life. Hence it was necessary that we should have the fullest testimony respecting the certainty and the excellency of that future state.

Know then, *that* state does indeed await you: know, that “light is sown for the righteous:” and “though weeping may endure for a night, joy will come in the morning.”]

2. Were in actual existence—

[The voice which attested the truth of these things, added also, “It is done.” The very glory of which the vision spake, is actually begun. Thousands and millions are already in possession of it. What a blessed thought, to those especially who have been bereaved of pious friends or relatives! They are already joined to the general assembly and Church of the first-born: their spirits are already perfect; perfect in purity, and perfect also in felicity. Think of the dying thief, when, on the very night of his crucifixion, he was received into the presence of his Lord in Paradise! We wonder not that “Paul desired to depart and to be with Christ,” accounting that infinitely better than the happiest state on earth. Nor

^e Heb. xi. 10.^f Heb. x. 34. and xi. 35.^g Matt. v. 12.

do we wonder that he made light of every thing which stood between him and the consummation of his bliss^h; and longed for the dissolution of his earthly tabernacle, that he might have it reared anew in that better worldⁱ — — — Let us only think how near we are to that blissful state, and nothing will be able to damp our ardour, or retard our progress, in the pursuit of it.]

CONTEMPLATE heaven, then, I entreat you : contemplate it,

1. As an object of pursuit—

[What is there in the whole universe that is worthy to be put in competition with it? O! blush that you can have your heart engaged about the vanities of time and sense, and that these eternal realities occupy so little of your attention — — —]

2. As an object of expectation—

[Can you really believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has given you a title to this blessedness, and ever be weary in the pursuit of it? The wonder is, how you can be content to live in this poor wretched world, when there is such blessedness awaiting you at your departure from it. Go and survey it from day to day: take Pisgah views of it: anticipate it: get such a sense of God's presence with you, as shall be a foretaste of it: and be daily "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day," when you yourself shall be privileged to say, "He hath made all things new."]

3. As an object of actual fruition—

[Ask of "those who came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and are now in the immediate presence of their God:" ask them, Whether they regret any labours or sufferings which they ever endured in their way to that bliss. Ask them too, How, with God's help, they would live, if they were again permitted to begin their course on earth? Ask yourselves too, what thoughts you will have of your present conduct, if ever you should reach those realms of bliss? These will be profitable considerations to you: they will place all present things in their just point of view: and will aid you greatly in running the race that is set before you.]

^h Rom. viii. 18. 2 Cor. v. 1—4.

ⁱ It being delivered on the night of the funeral of his late Majesty George III. the audience were here led to contemplate the blessed exchange which his Majesty now experienced. And the same may be done on occasion of any one who *dies in the Lord*. See Rev. xiv. 13.

MMDXXX.

GOD THE LIGHT AND TEMPLE OF THE NEW JERUSALEM.

Rev. xxi. 22, 23. *I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it : for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

“GLORIOUS things,” says the Psalmist, “are spoken of thee, thou city of God^a.” This was true of Jerusalem, as it existed in the days of David : but far more applicable is it to the new Jerusalem, which yet remains to be built, at a period that is fast approaching ; the foundations of which, indeed, have been already laid these eighteen hundred years ! Whether it is of *that* city that St. John is here speaking, or of heaven itself, has been, and still is, a subject of controversy amongst Christian divines. It is not without a great appearance of truth that this whole vision is considered as referring to the millennial age : for “the holy city which St. John saw, the New Jerusalem, *came down from God out of heaven*^b ;” and therefore could scarcely be heaven itself. Its foundations, and walls, and gates, are described by the very terms which are *confessedly and exclusively* applied by the prophets to the Church which shall be established at that period : and the flocking of all nations, with their kings and all their wealth, to this city^c, is the very event predicted in all the prophecies, as now fast approaching, and as ordained to continue for a thousand years. On the other hand, it is not without strong reason that others interpret this vision as relating to heaven itself : for the order of prophecy seems to require it. The day of judgment, and the punishment of the wicked, having been foretold in the preceding chapter, it seems reasonable to expect that the felicity of the saints should be next described : and to come back

^a Ps. lxxxvii. 3.^b ver. 2.^c ver. 24, 26.

from the day of judgment to the millennium, is to introduce confusion, where we should naturally expect to find order; and to cast a needless veil over prophecy, which, in itself, is necessarily involved in much obscurity. It is also said by these persons, that some of the expressions which are applied to this city—such as, that “there is no night or death there,” and that “all former things are passed away^d”—appear to determine the sense of the whole as pertaining, not to this world, but the next. But perhaps the *exclusive* application of the subject is not right on either side: for it is indisputable, that the prophecies in general have different periods of accomplishment. Numberless passages had somewhat of a literal fulfilment in the Jewish state, and afterwards a spiritual accomplishment in the apostolic age; and are still to receive their full and final accomplishment at a period yet future. And sometimes these different events are so intermixed (as in our Lord’s description of the day of judgment, which was shadowed forth by the destruction of Jerusalem^e), that you are necessitated to separate them according to the terms by which they are designated, rather than by any broad line of distinction observable in the prophecies themselves. Whilst, therefore, we suppose the state of the glorified Church to be primarily intended, we apprehend that its glory is considered as *commenced on earth*, and *completed in heaven*: for, in truth, the millennial age will be heaven, as it were, begun; and the heavenly glory will be the reign of Christ and of the saints consummated.

Understanding then our text in this view, I shall explain it,

I. In reference to the millennial age—

The voice of Scripture, whether in the Old Testament or the New, declares, that the period which is usually called the millennium will be a season of universal piety and most transcendent bliss. In this

^d ver. 4. and xxii. 5.

^e Matt. xxiv.

light it is described in my text: the saints being then pre-eminentlly distinguished by,

1. The spirituality of their devotion—

[In the Jewish Church, there were, a material temple, a visible glory, and splendid ordinances; and by these was God chiefly honoured; though, in comparison of real piety, even then the outward ceremonies were of no account. But, under the Christian dispensation, the place and manner of approaching God are matters of comparative indifference: the spirit with which he is approached is the all in all^f. Even now, at this time, God and the Lamb may be said to be the temple of our Jerusalem, by reason of the near access which his people enjoy to the more immediate presence of their God. But, in that day there will be such an abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit upon them, that they will be brought into far nearer communion with God than has fallen to the lot of believers, either in past ages or at the present time. So devout will be their worship, that they themselves will be, as it were, the sacrifices that shall be offered, yea, and the priests too, that offer them; whilst the Lord Jesus Christ will be the altar on which they are presented; and the Holy Spirit, the fire that will inflame their souls, and cause odours of a most grateful smell to ascend to heaven; their prayers and praises going up at the same time as incense before the mercy-seat, and God manifesting his acceptance of the services that are so offered. Then will be experienced, in all its fulness, that mutual indwelling of God in man, and man in God, of which the Scriptures so frequently speak, and which is surpassed only by the union of the Sacred Three in one glorious and eternal Godhead^g.]

2. The sublimity of their joy—

[Under the Jewish dispensation, much stress was laid on worldly prosperity; which, in fact, constituted a very considerable portion of the blessings that were promised to God's obedient people. The influences of the sun by day, and of the moon by night, were engaged to them for their good, that no earthly comfort might be lacking to them. But, in the millennial Church, there will be no need either of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, since "God himself and the Lamb will be the light thereof." There will be wonderful discoveries of God to their souls, and such manifestations of the Saviour, as now we have no conception of; so that the saints will be superior to all earthly joy; their delight in God being as great as mortality itself can either exercise or endure.

^f John iv. 23.

^g John xvii. 21.

Of this the prophets speak most copiously, and with the utmost plainness, particularly specifying that *THIS is to distinguish the millennial age*: "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, *in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound*^h." In another place, speaking expressly of that period, he uses yet more closely the very language of my text: "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy gloryⁱ." So again, in another place, with still greater force he says, "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, *when the Lord shall reign in Mount Zion, and before his ancients, gloriously*^k." In the whole of this we cannot but see, that, as knowledge will be marvellously increased in relation to heavenly things, so also will be the happiness of those who are instructed in them. Even at the present hour there are some persons who are thus favoured with the manifestations of God and of Christ to their souls; but at that day "the knowledge and enjoyment of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth, as diffusively and as deeply as the waters cover the sea^l." And, whereas it is thought that the expressions of St. John respecting there being "no pain in that city, and no night there, and no death," are too strong to be applied to the millennium, I must say that these very expressions are, in fact, cited from the Prophet Isaiah, who says of the millennial Church, "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory^m."]

In somewhat of a similar, though doubtless a more exalted, sense, the words before us may be explained,

II. In reference to the heavenly state—

In this view they may be understood as intimating,

1. That all external mediums will then be abolished—

[We must not forget, that the whole of this is, if not a literal citation from the Prophet Isaiah, yet so exactly corresponding with his words, as to be in fact his language; in which he conveys truths relative to the Christian Church in terms taken from things existing in the Jewish Church; and that, consequently, we must refer to the Jewish Church for

^h Isai. xxx. 26.

ⁱ Isai. lx. 19.

^k Isai. xxiv. 23.

^l Hab. ii. 14.

^m Isai. lx. 20. xxxv. 10. and xlix. 10.

our explanation of them. Now, under the Mosaic dispensation, the temple and ordinances were the necessary means of approaching God, and of obtaining acceptance with him. But in heaven they will be altogether superseded. There will be no need of the word to inform us, or of ministers to instruct us, or of ordinances whereby to serve God. As the Jewish ordinances, in comparison with the simpler worship of the Christian Church, were mere "beggarly elements," so the Christian ordinances will be of no account in the eternal world, by reason of the intimate and immediate communion which we shall then have with God. The high-priest within the vail had no sight of God in comparison of what we shall have; nor had the Disciples, who beheld Christ transfigured on the holy mount, any conception of his glory, in comparison of that with which our souls shall be filled, when we shall behold him face to face. *Now*, we are in a measure dependent on others, as "helpers of our joy;" but *then*, not all the angels in heaven can augment our enjoyment of God; nor can all the fallen angels in hell impede it. Our knowledge of God and of Christ will be clear, certain, continued; for we shall "see them as we are seen, and know them even as we are known."]

2. That all created glories will be eclipsed—

[The stars, which afford a brilliant light by night, are no longer visible when the sun is risen, because its radiance has extinguished their fainter beams. Thus the light which has been afforded by Prophets, or Apostles, or common ministers, will be to us no brighter than a glow-worm, when He will be then seen by us, not through the slow inductions of reason, but by an intuitive perception of his glory: and the Lord Jesus Christ, in all the glory of his person, and in all the wonders of his love, will be made clear to us, as the sun at noon-day. The angels who abide around the throne have not a more distinct view of the Godhead, nor a clearer conception of his perfections, his purposes, or his works, than we shall have, when once we are admitted to those realms of bliss; every one of us being filled according to the measure of the gift of Christ, and filled according to the utmost extent of our capacity.]

BEHOLD, then,

1. What enjoyments we should now affect—

[I am no enemy to the pleasures of sense, when they are pursued with moderation, and enjoyed with a due suberviency to the interests of our souls: for we are expressly told, that "God has given us all things richly to enjoy." But we are born for higher things than this world can afford us. Not

even the sun or moon, nor any creature-comforts whatever, should so fascinate us with their charms, as to bear any comparison with those sublimer enjoyments which God has ordained for us, in communion with himself, and with his dear Son Jesus Christ. Would to God that we all acted up to our professions in this respect! We are too prone to rest in external things, instead of aspiring to the possession of God and his Christ. Our worship is, for the most part, of too formal a cast, and our happiness is too much blended with what is carnal. To soar above the world to God, and to apprehend Christ himself, with all the heights and depths of his love—alas! alas! this is an attainment possessed by few, and even by them only at some more favoured seasons. But we should rise more above the things of time and sense: we should go forth with more ardour to our God and Saviour: we should soar more to heaven, and refresh ourselves with draughts of living water from the fountain-head. I pray you, brethren, be not satisfied with any thing that this world can bestow. Be not satisfied without bright discoveries of the Divine glory; and especially of “the glory of God, as shining in the face of Jesus Christ:” let your fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, be daily more familiar: and let every communication you receive from them cause you to pant after yet more abundant blessings at their hands, till you shall be satisfied in their presence, wherein alone will be found the fulness of joy for evermore. Let God and the Lamb be your heaven upon earth; and they shall be both your temple and your light to all eternity.]

2. What is the true state of the believing soul—

[Truly, with him the millennium is begun; yea, and heaven is begun also: for where God and the Lamb are our temple and our light, there is the millennium, and there is heaven. And is it I who say this? Saith not the Scripture the same? Yes; respecting the whole body of believers it saith, “Ye are come (not, ye *shall* come, but, ye *are* come) unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born that are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abelⁿ.” I know, indeed, that there is yet much amiss, even in the best of men; that their sun is darkened by many a cloud; and their worship debased by much deadness and langour. But still, the believer has “joys with which the

ⁿ Heb. xii. 22, 23.

stranger intermeddleth not." He is, in fact, a child, instructed and disciplined, by heavenly exercises, for heavenly enjoyments. He is now tuning his golden harp, whereon he shall play before the throne of God; and rehearsing, as it were, those heavenly songs in which he shall join with all the choir of saints and angels to all eternity. In a word, his knowledge of God, and his enjoyment of Christ, are progressively advancing under all the diversified occurrences of life: and when he dies, he will change his place only, but not his company or his employment. "He now dwells in God, and God in him:" "he is one with Christ, and Christ with him:" and, when taken hence, it will only be, that his union with the Deity may be more entire, and his communion with him more complete.]

MMDXXXI.

THE TREE OF LIFE.

Rev. xxii. 2. *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

THE Scripture represents divine truth to us in terms accommodated to our low and carnal apprehensions. We know nothing on earth so attractive to the eye as pompous palaces, fraught with exquisite workmanship of every kind, and especially of rare and precious stones, and enlivened with the gayest scenes which art and nature can produce. On this account St. John adopts these images to convey to our minds an idea of all that is great and glorious in heaven; having described which as a city unparalleled for beauty, he proceeds to tell us of a river, clear as crystal, that waters it; and of a tree of most wonderful qualities that adorns it.

It is our intention to shew,

I. What we are to understand by the tree of life—

It should seem that the tree mentioned in the text alludes to the tree of life which was created by God in Paradise—

[Some have thought that St. John alludes to the trees which are mentioned in Ezekiel's vision^a: and it must be confessed that there is a striking coincidence of expression in the two passages: but the river of which Ezekiel speaks, and the trees growing on either side of it, represent the Gospel, producing life and fruitfulness wherever it flows: whereas the tree, mentioned in the text, is expressly called "the tree of life;" and is spoken of as growing in the midst of Paradise. Now this is the exact description given us of the tree of life which was formed in Eden^b: to that therefore we rather suppose the reference to be made; and this idea is confirmed by various other passages, which we shall have occasion to notice.]

In this view Christ himself is intended under this figurative representation—

[The tree of life in Paradise may be considered as typical of Christ. It was a pledge to Adam, that, if he continued obedient to the end of the time appointed for his probation, he should live for ever. And the reason of his being driven afterwards from that tree by cherubims with fiery swords, was, that he might be compelled to seek those other means of acceptance which God had ordained, and which were shadowed forth by the tree of life^c. As God in later ages destroyed Jerusalem, that his people might not be able to offer their former sacrifices, and might thereby be shut up, as it were, to that great Sacrifice which the others typified; so God dealt with our first parents in the instance alluded to. Christ is to *fallen* man, what the tree of life was to man *in innocence*; he is, under the *covenant of grace*, what that was under the *covenant of works*; that ensured life to *obedience*, and Christ secures it to *faith in his name*. He is God's pledge to *us*, that, if we believe on him, we shall be saved^d: yea, even to those that are *in heaven* he must be considered as the pledge of their everlasting stability, since it is of his fruit that they eat^e, and their life is altogether bound up in him^f.]

That all may be persuaded to pluck the fruits of this tree, we proceed to shew,

II. Its transcendent excellence—

^a Ezek. xlvii. 12. Dr. Kennicott's Dissertation on this subject is extremely ingenious; but one of his strongest objections to the Author's view of it seems wholly obviated by the explanation of Gen. iii. 22—24, given in this Discourse. The Author does not judge it necessary to assign all his reasons for differing from such great authority, though he did not think it expedient wholly to omit them.

^b Gen. ii. 9.

^c Gen. iii. 22—24.

^d John xi. 24, 25.

^e Rev. ii. 7.

^f Col. iii. 4. Eph. i. 10.

It is not in beauty only that this tree excels, but in usefulness. It surpasses all others,

1. In its fruits—

[So *abundant* are its fruits, that all in heaven, and all on earth, may eat of them; yea, if there were as many worlds as there have been, or ever shall be, individuals in the world, there would be sufficient for them all. But its fruits are also *various*: other trees, however fruitful, bear but one kind of fruit; but this bears “twelve manner of fruits:” whatever is suited to our different appetites, is to be derived from him: pardon, peace, love, joy, holiness, and whatever else a devout soul longeth after, it is all to be found in him, and to be enjoyed through him. Besides, it has this surprising quality, that its fruitfulness is *continual*: “In every month” we may behold him laden with fruit, as well in the depths of winter, as in the midst of summer; in seasons of the deepest adversity, as well as under the sunshine of prosperity: there never is a moment wherein we shall meet with such a disappointment as Christ experienced^g: we may at all times go and “sit under his shadow, and find his fruit sweet unto our taste.”]

2. In its leaves—

[The leaves of other fruit-trees are, for the most part, worthless: but those of this tree are medicinal, and of most astonishing virtue; they are designed on purpose “for the healing of the nations.” There is no wound, however deadly, but the application of a leaf from this tree will heal it instantly. As a sight of the brazen serpent cured the wounded Israelites, and a touch of our Lord’s garment the diseased woman^h, so will the efficacy of these leaves be made apparent, whensoever they are applied. Nor is it one single wound that they will cure, but the whole soul, however infected in every part: as the tree, cast into the waters of Marah, healed the fountain itself, and rendered all its streams salubriousⁱ, so will a single leaf of this tree restore the most diseased soul to purity and peace. To every believer God will surely make known himself by that name which he has assumed for our encouragement, “I am the Lord that healeth thee^k.”]

From hence we may LEARN,

1. What use we should make of Christ now—

[We cannot but feel, if we be not altogether “past feeling,” that we stand in need of a Saviour. And behold, what a glorious salvation God has raised up for us! Should we not

^g Matt. xxi. 19.

^h Numb. xxi. 8, 9. and Matt. ix. 20—22.

ⁱ Exod. xv. 25.

^k Exod. xv. 26.

then apply to this Saviour? Has the Sun of Righteousness arisen with healing in his beams¹, and shall we not go forth to his light? Is there balm in Gilead, is an almighty Physician there^m, and shall we not seek the healing of our wounds? Shall the tree of life be accessible to us at all times, yea, shall the flaming sword be driving us *to* it instead of *from* it, and we not go to apply its leaves and eat of its fruit? Let us, whether dying of the wounds of sin, or agonizing through the fiery darts of temptation, go to Christ without delay; for surely virtue shall come forth from him, and heal us allⁿ. If he submitted to suffer for us that he might "heal us by his stripes^o," and reconcile us to God by his death, "much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life^p." We may consider him as God's pledge to us, that, where he is, there shall also his servants be; and that, because he liveth, we shall live also^q.]

2. What enjoyment we shall have of Christ hereafter—

[The words immediately following the text further confirm the sense given to the text itself. Sin entered into Paradise, and a tremendous curse followed it: but into heaven no sin, and therefore "no curse shall ever come:" nothing shall invade the peace, nothing disturb the security, of those who inhabit that glorious city: while the tree of life continues there, all that eat of its fruits are kept from a possibility of falling. O blessed state! All feasting upon the glories of Jesus; and eternity the duration of their bliss! May we all arrive at that Paradise of God, and unite with all the choir of heaven in singing, "Salvation to God and to the Lamb for ever and ever."]

¹ Mal. iv. 2.

^m Jer. viii. 22.

ⁿ Luke vi. 19.

^o Isai. liii. 5.

^p Rom. v. 10.

^q John xiv. 19.

MMDXXXII.

OBEDIENCE, THE WAY TO LIFE.

Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

IN the inspired volume we do not find such a rigid adherence to systematic accuracy as the jealousies of controversial writers have subsequently introduced. The expressions which were used under the legal

dispensation have been sometimes adopted also under the Christian dispensation; and the law of faith been delivered in terms nearly assimilated to those which were characteristic of the law of works. For instance, on one occasion, when a young man asked of our blessed Lord, "what he must do to obtain eternal life;" our blessed Lord answered, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments^a." Now, if this direction be taken without due explanation, it will altogether invalidate the Gospel of Christ, and supersede entirely the whole work which our blessed Saviour came from heaven to accomplish for us. The answer was given in order to convince this self-deluded man, that he neither had kept the Commandments, nor could keep them, perfectly; and that, consequently, he must seek for salvation in the way provided for him in the Gospel. In like manner, the passage which I have just read to you must also be explained according to the analogy of faith. If we were to interpret it as importing, that our obedience to the Ten Commandments would entitle us to heaven, we must set aside all that the holy Apostles have written, and go back to Moses as our only instructor; or rather, I must say, we must consign over to perdition every child of man; since God has declared, that "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified^b." To prevent any such fatal mistake, I will unfold to you,

I. The true nature of evangelical obedience—

When the commandments are mentioned, we are apt to confine our attention to the Decalogue, *i. e.* to the Ten Commandments which were written by God upon tables of stone, and delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai. But to us, under the Gospel, is another commandment given, and which is called in Scripture "The law of faith^c." To "do God's commandments" then, we must,

1. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—

^a Matt. xix. 16, 17. ^b Rom. iii. 19, 20. ^c Rom. iii. 27.

[The same inspired writer, who speaks to us in the text, says, "This is God's commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ^d." In truth, till we have obeyed this command, all other obedience, except so far as the mere letter of the commandments, is impracticable; and, if rendered ever so perfectly, would be utterly ineffectual for our salvation. All *spiritual* obedience is the *fruit of faith*. We have no strength for it, till we have believed in Christ. It is only by grace received from Christ that we can perform any thing that is truly acceptable to God. A tree destitute of roots might as well produce its proper fruits, and in a perfect state, as we obey the law without the communication of grace from Christ to our souls. He himself has said, "Without me ye can do nothing^e."

But, supposing we could of ourselves obey the law, even in its utmost extent, which not the most perfect man that ever lived could do, seeing that "in many things we all offend^f," still we never could atone to God for the sins we have already committed: "after having done all that was required of us, we should still be only unprofitable servants^g." And therefore we must come to God through Christ, relying wholly on the merits of his death, and pleading only his perfect righteousness as the ground of our acceptance before God^h. Till we have obeyed this command, we are under a sentence of condemnation; which can never be reversed, but through faith in Christⁱ.]

2. Comply with the whole of His revealed will—

[The law of the Ten Commandments is not made void by the Gospel, nor is one of its requirements lessened in any degree. We are as much bound to love God with all our heart and soul, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, as Adam was in Paradise: nor if we have truly believed in Christ, shall we wish any one of its demands to be lowered. We shall see that law to be "holy, and just, and good" in every respect; and we shall pant after, and labour for, a perfect conformity to its every requirement. We shall not be satisfied with a *literal* observance of its precepts: we shall aspire after the highest possible attainments; and strive, according to our ability, to be "holy as God is holy, and perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect" — — — At the same time, our dependence will not be on our own obedience, but on the finished work of Christ; from a full conviction that there is "no other foundation on which any man can build^k," "nor any other name but His whereby any man can be saved^l."]

^d 1 John iii. 23.

^e John xv. 5.

^f Jam. iii. 2.

^g Luke xvii. 10.

^h Phil. iii. 9.

ⁱ John iii. 18, 36.

^k 1 Cor. iii. 11.

^l Acts iv. 12.

Having shewn what evangelical obedience is, let me point out to you,

II. The blessedness attached to it—

To understand this aright, we should look to Adam in Paradise—

[He, whilst he continued in a state of innocence, had liberty to eat of the tree of life, which was to him a sacramental pledge, that, when his obedience should be completed, he should enter into the Paradise above. But when he had sinned, he was debarred from all access to the tree of life; because it could no longer be available for the benefits which, during his state of innocence, it assured to him. He might have ignorantly had recourse to it still as the means of life, if he had continued in Paradise: and therefore God drove him out from thence, and placed cherubims with a fiery sword at the gate of Eden, to prevent him from making any such rash attempt; that so he might be shut up to the salvation which was now revealed to him through the promised Seed^m.

Now the privilege which he forfeited is, through Christ, renewed to us: or rather, I should say, the privilege which he enjoyed in the shadow, is now imparted to us in the substance. He possessed his by obeying the commandments written on his heart; and we enjoy ours by obeying the commandments revealed to us in the Gospel. He possessed not his by any claim of merit, but by the free and sovereign gift of God: nor do we obtain ours but in a way of sovereign grace. Yet, as in his case, so in ours, the work and the reward are inseparable: and the very "right" conceded to him by works, is vouchsafed to us by faith. The very word which we here translate "right," is, in another part of the same author's works, translated "power:" "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his nameⁿ." There is between this passage and our text a perfect identity of import. In both cases, access to Christ, as the tree of life, was given by faith; and that access to Christ, and consequent participation of his benefits, was a pledge of eternal life.

True, in order to a full enjoyment of the final reward, there must be, as in Adam's case, an obedience also to the moral law. But, in both cases, the reward is ultimately and equally of grace. What would have been vouchsafed to him without a Mediator, if he had continued obedient to God's commands, will be vouchsafed to us through a Mediator, notwithstanding

^m Gen. iii. 22—24.

ⁿ ἐξουσία.

our past disobedience; provided we comply with the requisitions of the Gospel, by a life of faith, and by a life of holiness.]

In both cases, obedience is equally a *condition* of eternal life—

[Persons are apt to take offence at the word *condition*. But the word is proper or improper, according to the sense we annex to it. Strictly speaking, obedience would not have given to Adam in Paradise any *claim* to heaven, any further than heaven had been promised to him as a reward, in the event of his continuing faultless throughout the whole period appointed for his probation. But to a person seeking salvation by the law, it would actually give ground for boasting, because he would demand salvation as a *debt*. But under the Gospel, however obedient we be, our hope of salvation is founded on Christ alone; and to all eternity must the glory of it be given to him alone. Hence, when we speak of obedience as a *condition* of eternal life, we mean no more, than that *without it* no salvation can be attained; obedience being the necessary fruit of faith, and the only possible evidence of our meetness for heaven. In this, its true and only proper sense, we most cordially adopt the language of our text, and say, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to eat of the tree of life, and enter in through the gates of the city.” Whatever was accorded to Adam in Paradise, during his obedience to the law, shall be vouchsafed to us, if we be obedient to the Gospel. Was he strengthened and comforted by the tree of life? so shall we be, by a life of faith on Christ Jesus, who is the tree of life which beareth twelve manner of fruits—the summer-fruits of prosperity, and the winter-fruits of adversity, according as the necessities of his people shall require. And, as the heavenly Paradise would have been his; so will that city, described in the foregoing chapter, be ours, with the freest participation of all its riches and of all its honours.]

APPLICATION—To all then I say,

1. Perform your duties—

[Come to Christ, every one of you, as sinners, that you may be saved from wrath through him — — And endeavour to live altogether to His glory, shewing forth, in all things, your faith by your works — — —]

2. Enjoy your privileges—

[Go to the tree of life; take of it freely; and eat of it every hour of your lives. You are told, that “the very leaves of that tree are for the healing of the nations.” What then shall its fruits be? Verily, a life of faith in the Son of God, as having

loved you and given himself for you, shall richly supply your every want; and be not a pledge only, but a foretaste also, of heaven itself. And go now, and survey the heavenly city, its foundations, its walls, its gates of pearls, its very pavement of the purest gold: it is all yours; yours by "right," by title, by the strongest of all possible claims—the promise and the oath of God. Live in expectation of it now, and you shall soon enjoy it for evermore.]

MMDXXXIII.

CHRIST THE MORNING STAR.

Rev. xxii. 16. *I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*

THE Revelation which had been made to John, contained predictions of an uninterrupted series of events from that time even to the end of the world. They had indeed been made to him through the instrumentality of an angel: but they were nevertheless as certain, as if they had been delivered immediately by God himself; seeing that the angel had received his commission and instructions directly from Jesus, who is "THE LORD OF THE HOLY PROPHETS^a." It seems to have been with a view to assure John, together with the saints in all succeeding ages, of the truth and certainty of all that had been spoken, that Jesus gave this description of his own character: in which we may see,

I. His personal character—

That Jesus was "the offspring of David," is obvious enough—

[He was to be so according to the Scriptures^b: and that he was so, both by his father's and his mother's side, the genealogies that are given of him expressly affirm^c. Indeed Divine Providence so ordered it, that, in consequence of a taxation decreed throughout the Roman Empire in the time of Cæsar Augustus, his reputed father was under the necessity of going up to Bethlehem, to be taxed there: by which means there was a public enrolment of the name of Jesus, (who was

^a Compare ver. 6. with the text.

^b Isai. xi. 1.

^c Matt. i. and Luke iii.

born there at that time,) as belonging to the house and lineage of David^d."]

But He was no less "the Root" also of David—

[How this could be, was but little understood, till after the day of Pentecost. Jesus did indeed often speak of himself as God; but still his Disciples did not clearly apprehend his meaning. Yet that the Messiah, who was to be "a Child born and a Son given," was also to be "the Mighty God," even "God with us," was fully and distinctly revealed in the prophetic writings^e. But the most learned of the Jewish Rabbins, when a remarkable prophecy to this effect was adduced from the Psalms by our blessed Lord, were unable to solve the difficulty proposed to them: they could not explain how David's Son could possibly be David's Lord^f. Nor can our modern Socinians ever return a satisfactory answer to our Lord's question; which can only be answered by acknowledging, that Jesus is God as well as man; the Creator of all things in his Divine nature, though himself a creature according to his human nature. It is in this sense that he was "the Root," at the same time that he was also "the Offspring," of David: and to this agree the most decided testimonies of Holy Writ^g——]

Our Lord proceeds to mention,

II. His official character—

The voice of prophecy announced him as "a Star that should come out of Jacob^h." But in our text he designates himself as "the Morning star." Now it is the office of the morning star, not merely to give light, as others do, but to usher in the day: and in this particular view the title assumed by our Lord should be exclusively considered. We observe then, that,

1. By his first rising in the world he introduced the Gospel day—

[Previous to his appearing, there were some faint glimmerings of light, by means of the types and shadows of the Mosaic law: but as soon as he entered on his ministry, he diffused a light around him; dispelling the mists by which the

^d Luke ii. 1—6.

^e Isai. ix. 6. and Isai. vii. 14. with Matt. i. 23.

^f Ps. cx. 1. with Matt. xxii. 41—46.

^g John i. 1, 14. Rom. i. 3, 4. and ix. 5. ^h Numb. xxiv. 17.

Pharisees had obscured the law, and exhibiting in his own person a perfect pattern of that obedience which the law required. By his death he accomplished the prophecies, and shewed more clearly what were the designs of God respecting the redemption of the world: and by his resurrection and ascension, and sending down the Holy Ghost to testify of him, he gave to the benighted world the light of perfect day. Then he appeared as “the Day-spring from on highⁱ,” even as “the Sun of Righteousness, that had arisen with healing in his wings^k.”]

2. By his rising in the heart he now introduces the day of salvation into the soul—

[That there is to be a manifestation of Christ to the hearts of men, different from any thing that is vouchsafed to the unregenerate soul, is certain^l: and St. Peter speaks of it expressly as “the day-star arising in our hearts^m.” What kind of a manifestation this is, may be conceived from the history of Zaccheus, to whose soul it was made, and who experienced the instantaneous benefits arising from itⁿ——— This change was by no means peculiar to him; it is wrought in all who truly embrace the Gospel^o, though, in respect of suddenness, it may greatly vary. The distinguishing effect of this manifestation is, that the glorious character of Christ, which was before hidden from our eyes, is now distinctly seen^p; and he is embraced, as the most valued treasure of the soul^q, the ground of ineffable and eternal joy^r.]

3. By his present light he gives us an assured prospect of yet a brighter day even in this world—

[It is certain that there is a day approaching, when the light now vouchsafed to the Church shall be greatly increased; when “the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of many days^s.” This will surely take place in the Millennium, when “the Lord will bind up the breach of his ancient people the Jews, and heal the stroke of their wound.” Then the whole Gentile world also shall be made to behold his glory: and “the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as completely and as deeply as the waters cover the sea.” This idea seems to be peculiarly referred to, inasmuch as the morning-star is the sure forerunner of a brighter state under the influence of the rising sun. In this view, all that has hitherto

ⁱ Luke i. 78.

^k Mal. iv. 2.

^l John xiv. 21—23.

^m 2 Pet. i. 19.

ⁿ Luke xix. 5, 6, 9.

^o Acts xxvi. 18.

^p John i. 4, 5, 9, 14. and 2 Cor. iv. 6.

^q Phil. iii. 7, 8.

^r 1 Pet. i. 8.

^s Isai. xxx. 26.

been done for the Church shall be only as the drop before the shower, seeing that the whole world shall form, as it were, but one great temple, which "God himself will fill with his glory, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof".]

4. By his appearing at the end of the world, he will introduce eternal day—

[He tells us that at that period he will "give to his obedient people the Morning star^u." Yes, he will come again in his glory, and in all the brightness and majesty of the Godhead: and then will all remaining darkness be for ever banished. Now we "know but in part," and "see but as in a glass darkly: but then shall we see face to face." Then all the mysterious designs of God from the beginning will be brought forth to light, together with the reasons of all his dispensations: then will all the perfections of God shine forth with united splendour, not only in the work of redemption as wrought out by Christ, but in the salvation of every individual amongst his people. And how will the wisdom of a life of godliness then appear! — — — Then indeed will be consummated the happiness of man; and God be glorified in all.]

ADDRESS—

1. To those who have never yet beheld the glory of Christ—

[As in the days of his flesh, so in this day, it is not every one to whom the light comes, that duly apprehends it^x. Satan is yet successful in blinding the eyes of many^y. If you have never yet seen Jesus as "fairer than ten thousand, and altogether lovely," this is your unhappy state. O pray then that God would open your eyes, and "call you out of darkness into his marvellous light!" Till then you can have no real fellowship with God, nor any hope of acceptance through the blood of Jesus^z.]

2. To those who profess to know and love him—

[Happy is it for you if your profession be justified by your actual experience. But you must remember, that there are many who "*say, they are in the light*, and yet are in darkness even until now;" yea, they "*walk in darkness, and know not whither they go*, because that *darkness hath blinded their eyes*." Would you know, who are in that state: I answer, All they who, in the midst of a profession of religion, are indulging any of those tempers that are contrary to love and

^t Rev. xxi. 23.

^u Rev. ii. 28.

^x John i. 5, 10, 11.

^y 2 Cor. iv. 4.

^z 1 John i. 6, 7.

charity^a. Hear ye this, O ye censorious and uncharitable, ye proud and envious, ye fretful and passionate professors! Talk not of the light ye have in your *heads*, whilst there is such darkness in your *hearts*. You must be able to say of your *tempers*, as well as of your *principles*, "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth^b." If you cannot appeal both to God and man for the truth of this, deceive not your own souls: for if you are children of light indeed, you must walk in the light, "even as Christ himself walked^c." But, let such a change be wrought in your whole spirit and conduct, and Christ will surely "give you the morning star," even the full enjoyment of his presence and glory in the eternal world.]

^a 1 John ii. 9—11.

^b 1 John ii. 8.

^c 1 Thess. v. 5—8. 1 John ii. 8.

MMDXXXIV.

INVITATION TO COME TO CHRIST.

Rev. xxii. 17. *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

RICH beyond expression are the blessings held forth to us in the word of life: and as free as light are the invitations given us to partake of them. Not only in the epistles to the seven Churches, and in the other parts of this prophetic book, but throughout the whole Scriptures, is every possible encouragement afforded to the sinners of mankind, to repent of sin, and to "lay hold upon the hope that is set before them" in the Gospel. And here, in the close of the inspired volume, are invitations to us reiterated from every quarter, that we may be prevailed upon to accept of mercy, ere the door of mercy be for ever closed.

Let us consider,

I. The blessings to which we are invited—

They are here designated by "the water of life." We will notice them,

1. Generally—

[The source from whence this water flows, is no other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. In the very chapter before us, "the pure river of the water of life" is said to "proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb^a." As in the wilderness, the water gushing from the rock that had been smitten supplied the necessities of all Israel; so the Lord Jesus Christ, when smitten with the rod of the law, poured forth the waters of salvation for the benefit of the whole world^b. He is "the fountain of living waters^c;" and whosoever cometh to him, may drink and live for ever. In the chapter before our text, the Lord Jesus Christ declared this to the Apostle John: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely^d." In the days of his flesh, he spoke repeatedly to this effect. To the Samaritan woman, of whom he had asked a draught of water, he said, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water^e." On another occasion, when the people had, according to custom, drawn water from the pool of Siloam, he stood in the place of public concourse, and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink: and out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This latter expression is then explained by the Evangelist, who adds, "This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive^f." Now here we have, *in a general view*, the import of the expression in my text. The Holy Spirit is that water of life which Christ is empowered to bestow: and wherever that blessed Spirit is imparted, there is within the person's own bosom a principle of life, seeking for vent in all suitable expressions of duty to God; or, as our Lord elsewhere expresses it, "there is within him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life^g;" to which the Holy Spirit, in all his tendencies and operations, leads us to aspire.]

2. More particularly—

[Three blessings in particular I will specify, as granted by our Lord Jesus Christ unto all who come unto him; namely, *pardon*, and *holiness*, and *glory*.

The Lord Jesus will in the first place bestow the *pardon* of our sins. He is said by the prophet to be "the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness^h:" and all who come to wash in that fountain are cleansed from all their sins. In it even "sins of a crimson dye" are made "white as snowⁱ:"

^a ver. 1.

^d Rev. xxi. 6.

^g John iv. 14.

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^b 1 Cor. x. 4.

^c John iv. 10.

^h Zech. xiii. 1.

T

^e Jer. ii. 13.

^f John vii. 37—39.

ⁱ Isai. i. 18.

as it is said, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin^k."

For the purposes of *sanctification* also shall this gift be bestowed: for, by the Prophet Ezekiel, he says, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and to keep my judgments to do them^l."

Eternal *glory* also will he confer upon them: for, when they have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," he will "lead them unto living fountains of waters^m," and will cause them to "drink of the rivers of pleasure" which are "at God's right hand for evermoreⁿ."]]

Let us now turn our attention to,

II. The invitation itself—

Here we cannot but notice the very peculiar urgency and freeness of it—

1. The urgency, to overcome reluctance—

["The Spirit says, Come." The Holy Spirit of God has undertaken the office of revealing Christ to men, and of bringing sinners to Christ for the remission of their sins^o. He descended visibly on the day of Pentecost for these ends; and by the ministry of the Apostles, as also by his operation on the souls of men, wrought powerfully upon multitudes, whom he "made willing in the day of his power," and effectually subdued to the obedience of faith. Thus at this time also is he carrying on the work that has been assigned him in the economy of redemption. In the written word, he speaks to us: by the ministry of his servants, he pleads with us: by the convictions which he fastens on our mind and conscience, he strives with us individually; if by any means he may constrain us to accept the blessings offered to us in the Gospel. His voice to us every day and hour is, "Come," come to Christ as the Saviour of your soul.

"The Bride also says, Come." The Bride is the Church, "the Lamb's wife," who has experienced in her own person all the blessedness of that salvation which she is so desirous of imparting to all around her. The Church of old addressed her Lord, saying, "Draw *me*, and *we* will run after thee^p:" that is, 'Draw *me*, and I will not come alone: I will surely labour to the utmost of my power to make known to others

^k 1 John i. 7.

^m Rev. vii. 14, 17.

^o John xvi. 8, 14.

^l Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

ⁿ Ps. xxxvi. 8. and xvi. 11.

^p Cant. i. 4.

the wonders of thy love, that they also may be partakers of my felicity, and unite with me in honouring and adoring thee.' Thus the Church does in every age. She is "the pillar and ground of the truth^a," supporting it firmly in the world, and exhibiting, as by public inscriptions that are visible to all, the glory and excellency of the Gospel salvation. She then unites with the Spirit of God in saying to all around her, "Come:" Come to Jesus and see what a Saviour he is. See in *me* what he both can and will do for you also; however far off you may now be, you may draw nigh to him with a full assurance of acceptance with him; and though now "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, you may become fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God^r."

"Let him also that heareth, say, Come." Those to whom the foregoing invitations are announced, should unite their efforts to make them known, and to induce every creature under heaven to accept them. Think not, brethren, that you have performed your duty when you have heard these invitations from the lips of your minister; no, nor when you have yourselves complied with his advice. You are all to be preachers in your own circles; all to repeat to your friends and relatives, your families and dependents, the glad tidings which you hear of a free and full salvation; and, with one heart and one voice, should join in saying to all around you, "Come, come, come." This was the conduct of Andrew and of Philip, when they had found the Saviour^s; and this must be the conduct of us all, in our respective spheres.]

2. The freeness, to counteract despondency—

[We are all invited to "take of the water of life freely." If we are "athirst," we are the very persons whose names, if I may so speak, are especially written on the cards of invitation. Indeed, if our names had been expressly recorded in this passage, we should not have had a thousandth part of the assurance of God's willingness to accept us that we now have; for there might be other persons of our name: but no mourning penitent in the universe can err in tracing his name in the designation that is here given.

It may be, however, that some may say, 'I am not sufficiently athirst to be able to appropriate to myself this character. I should be glad indeed to obtain mercy of the Lord; but I do not pant after it as the hart after the water-brooks, and therefore I have not in myself the qualification that is here required.' To counteract such desponding fears, the Saviour says, "*Whosoever will*, let him take of the water of life freely."

^a 1 Tim. iii. 15.

^r Eph. ii. 19.

^s John i. 40, 41, 43, 45.

If you have not all the *thirst* that you can wish, have you the *inclination*? have you the *desire*? Then you are the person invited: and you must not dream of staying till you can bring certain qualifications along with you, but come and take these blessings “*freely*, without money and without price^t.”]

To impress this subject the more deeply on your minds, let me ADDRESS a few words,

1. To the reluctant—

[Many are the excuses which you urge for your declining the invitation sent you in the Gospel: and to you they appear perhaps sufficient to justify your refusal. But your Lord and Saviour will not be deceived: he sees the radical indisposition of your mind to the blessings which he offers you; and will say of you, as he did in reference to those of old, “They shall never taste of my supper^u.” You may be offering a variety of pleas: but he will put the true construction on them all, “Ye *will* not come unto me that ye may have life^x.” O think, how bitterly you will regret your present conduct, when you shall see unnumbered myriads, who were once as far off from him as you now are, sitting down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and you yourselves be cast out into outer darkness! What weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth will you then experience to all eternity^y! How will those words sound in your ears at the last day, “Often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; but ye would not^z!” Do but reflect on this one moment,—“*I would*; and *ye would not*.” Verily, that reflection will constitute the very summit of your misery in hell. I pray you, hold not out any longer against the urgent invitations which are now sent you; but come unto the Saviour, and accept the rest which he has promised to all that are weary and heavy-laden.]

2. To the desponding—

[What can the Saviour add to convince you of his willingness to accept and bless you? Perhaps you will say, ‘I have tried to come to him, and I cannot: and I have tried so long, that I think it in vain to entertain a hope of final success.’ Is this the case? Then hear what the Saviour says to you by the Prophet Isaiah: When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them: I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of

^t Isai. lv. 1.

^u Luke xiv. 16—24.

^x John v. 40.

^y Matt. viii. 11, 12.

^z Matt. xxiii. 37.

water, and the dry land springs of water^a. Now I cannot conceive a case more desperate than that which is here depicted: The person is in himself "poor and needy." (There you will easily recognize your own character. He has "sought for water," even for the waters of salvation. (That represents what you also profess to have done.) He has "found none." (There is your unhappy lot painted with the utmost precision.) "His tongue faileth for thirst;" so that he is ready to sink in utter despair. (What can you add to that, to bring it home more fully to your own case?) Yet this is *the very person for whom God has reserved his blessings, and to whom he engages to impart them.* 'But I am in such a state, that it is almost impossible to deliver me: you might as well expect a river to be running over the highest mountains, as for the waters of salvation to reach me.' Is that the case? says the Saviour: then "*I will open rivers in high places; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.*" See here, my brethren, what wonderful condescension there is in your Lord and Saviour, that he will so describe your case, that it should not be possible for you to fail in recognising your own character, or to doubt any longer his ability and willingness to save you. Take then this passage; and rely upon it; and plead it with him; and expect the accomplishment of it to your own soul. Then shall "your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noon-day^b." You shall find that the Saviour is not "a fountain sealed^c," but "a fountain opened^d;" and "out of that well of salvation you shall drink water with joy" for evermore^e.]

^a Isai. xli. 17, 18.^b Isai. lviii. 10.^c Cant. iv. 12.^d Ps. xxxvi. 9. Joel iii. 18.^e Isai. xii. 3.

MMDXXXV.

THE PERFECTION AND SANCTITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Rev. xxii. 18, 19. *I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

THE voice of inspiration carrying with it the authority of Jehovah, it might be expected that persons, eager to establish particular sentiments of their own, or to draw disciples after them, would profess

to have received revelations from heaven, that so they might obtain a more entire and extended influence over their adherents. To prevent such impositions under the Mosaic dispensation, God said to the whole of Israel, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it^a." In like manner, at the close of the Christian dispensation, our Lord directed his servant John to record this solemn declaration: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and, if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

In its primary sense, this declaration seems to refer to the particular book which contains the Revelation of St. John: but, as this book completes and closes the sacred canon, I consider the warning as extending to the whole of the New Testament Scriptures; and as making known to us,

I. The perfection of the Scriptures—

That may be considered as perfect, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be withdrawn. Now the Scriptures, in this view of them, are perfect: for there is nothing in them either superfluous or defective. They are perfect,

1. As a revelation from God—

[That they might discover to us many things which are at present either altogether hid, or but obscurely revealed, is certain; but they have made known to us all that we are concerned to know; and the secret counsels, which, if revealed, would have only administered to our pride, are better hidden from our view. Indeed, God has hidden many things on purpose, that, whilst we behold much which he alone could reveal, we may be constrained to humble ourselves before him as creatures who are altogether indebted to him for all the light they enjoy, and dependent on him for the instruction

^a Deut. iv. 12.

which they hope yet farther to receive. In the Holy Scriptures, Jehovah displays, as it were, before our eyes, all his glorious perfections, and opens to us his eternal purposes, especially respecting the redemption of the world by the incarnation and death of his only-begotten Son. In them too, the person, work, and offices of Christ are all set before us; and that with such plainness that we cannot err, and with such a weight of evidence that we cannot doubt.]

2. As a directory to us—

[In this view also they are perfect: for whilst, on the one hand, there is nothing revealed for the mere purpose of gratifying our curiosity; so, on the other hand, there is nothing withheld that could in any way conduce to the welfare of our souls. Respecting the whole of spiritual life, we have all the instruction that can be desired. The manner in which that life is imparted, and carried on unto perfection, is so fully delineated, that there is nothing wanting either for our direction or encouragement. And for our behaviour towards men, there is a path marked out for us in general principles, which are applicable to every situation and circumstance in which we can be placed; and it is yet further traced out to us in examples, which serve to illustrate every virtue which we can be called to exercise. Nor have we any cause to complain that the rules were not more minute and numerous: for to have made a specific rule for every possible case would have been of no service, because the Scriptures would have been so voluminous, that a whole life of study would not have been sufficient to make us acquainted with them: but by laying down a few general principles, and embodying them in living examples, God has given us all the information that we can need. In every relation of life, whether as husbands or wives, parents or children, masters or servants, magistrates or subjects, we have rules laid down for us, from which we cannot greatly deviate, if only we implore of God the guidance of his good Spirit. Only “let our eye be single, and our whole body will be full of light.”]

In the prohibition to add to, or take from, the Holy Scriptures, we also behold,

II. Their sanctity—

Nothing can exceed the strictness with which the smallest alteration of God's blessed word is forbidden—

[If we add to the inspired writings, God will lay on us all the plagues which are there denounced against sin and sinners: and, if we take from them, “God will take away our part from

the book of life," and never suffer us to taste any of those blessings which they hold forth in rich abundance to the upright soul. In many other places we read of specific judgments denounced against sin; but in no place are the denunciations of God's wrath so full and comprehensive as in the passage before us. It was necessary that a fiery sword should be thus waved before our eyes, to prevent us from trespassing on that hallowed ground: and though some slight alterations might seem allowable for the purpose of accommodating the expressions of Scripture more to our own apprehensions or desires, yet will God on no account suffer us to suppress or add one single word.]

Nor is the severity of the prohibition at all more alarming than the occasion requires—

[In no other way can we offer a greater insult to God, or do a greater injury to man, than by erasing what God has spoken, or by obtruding any conceits of our own under the sanction of his authority. If we presume to leave out any thing which God has revealed, what is it but an impeachment of his wisdom in revealing it? And if we presume to add any thing to his word, what is it but a denial of his goodness, in withholding from us information which he ought to have communicated? And both in the one case and the other, it is a most impious imposition upon man, whom we defraud by our concealment of the truth, or deceive by substituting our own fallible dogmas in the place of it.

When Moses made the tabernacle, this solemn injunction was repeatedly given to him; "See thou make all things according to the pattern shewn to thee in the mount." And it would have been at his peril to have deviated in any respect from it; because the whole structure, together with all the furniture thereof, was typical of things which were to be more fully revealed under the Christian dispensation: and any departure from the instructions given him would have destroyed the beauty and harmony of the whole. So will it be at our peril to change or modify any part of that system which God has revealed in his word. We must take the whole simply as we have received it, and not in any respect presume to be wise above what is written.]

The prohibition to alter the Scriptures yet farther marks,

III. The reverence due to them—

If we are not to change the word of Scripture, neither are we to elude its force. On the contrary,

we are to maintain the strictest jealousy over ourselves, that we make not any portion of the inspired writings void, but that we adhere to them with the utmost possible fidelity,

1. In our exposition of their import—

[It is perfectly surprising to see with what unhallowed boldness many will put their own construction upon God's blessed word, denying its plainest import, and annexing to it a sense totally contrary to its most obvious meaning. To what a fearful extent this liberty has been taken by Papists is well known: but, to the shame of Protestants, I must confess, that in this guilt they also participate to a great extent. Nor do I here speak of those only who fearlessly expunge those parts of Scripture which are hostile to their views, but of those adverse parties in the Church, who, whilst they profess to reverence the whole of the inspired volume, wrest and pervert its plainest assertions, in order to maintain a system of their own. This it is that has introduced endless dissensions, divisions, and bitter animosities into the Church of Christ. Men have adopted sentiments of their own, instead of submitting to be taught of God; and then they have laboured, by forced constructions and ingenious criticisms, to make the Scriptures accord with their views. The different parties all see and condemn this disingenuousness in their adversaries, whilst yet, without remorse, they practise it themselves. In truth, so fettered are the great mass even of teachers themselves by human systems, that there are scarcely any to be found, who will dare to give to the whole of Scripture its true import, and to bring forward in their ministrations all that God has spoken in his word: and so vitiated is the taste of the generality of their hearers, that scarcely any would be found to approve of this fidelity, even if it were exercised towards them. The pious reformers of the established Church were of a different mind; they have faithfully declared to us the whole counsel of God: but amongst their degenerate children there are few who follow their example; almost all having ranged themselves as partisans of opposite and contending opinions, instead of conforming themselves simply to the declarations of Holy Writ. But I hope the time is not far distant, when *ALL the articles of our Church* will be *equally* esteemed, and *EVERY truth of Scripture* be impartially brought forward in our public ministrations.]

2. In our submission to their authority—

[To every part of God's blessed word we should bow with meek submission; not regarding any doctrine as "an hard saying," or doubting the truth of it because it exceeds

our comprehension. We are but children; and, as children, we should receive with implicit reverence whatever has been spoken by our heavenly Instructor. And if with simplicity of mind we receive the first principles of the oracles of God, we shall have our understandings progressively enlarged, and be gradually guided into all truth. In relation to those things which we do not at present understand, we should be content to say, "What I know not now, I shall know hereafter."

So likewise, in reference to the commands of God; no one of them should be considered as "grievous," but all be viewed as "holy, and just, and good." To explain them away, or to lower them to the standard of our own attainments is criminal in a high degree. We should have no wish but to be conformed to the mind and will of God, and to have our whole souls poured, as it were, into the mould of his Gospel. As far as respects the impiety of the act, it matters very little whether we change *the words* or *the sense* of the Holy Scriptures: in either case we greatly offend God, and entail on ourselves all the judgments that are denounced against us in the text.]

APPLICATION—

[The words immediately following my text may well serve to enforce every word that has been spoken. It is the Lord Jesus Christ himself who "testifies of these things," and who, to impress them the more deeply on our minds, says, "Surely I come quickly." He will come quickly: and whatever he has spoken shall surely come to pass; not one jot or tittle of it shall ever fail. We may now take away from his word, or add to it, as seemeth us good; but in that day his word shall stand; and his judgments be dispensed in perfect accordance with it. We may deceive others by our perversions of Scripture, and may even deceive ourselves: but him we cannot deceive: nor, when he shall pass sentence on us for our temerity, shall we be able to elude his vengeance. I pray you then to regard the Scriptures with the veneration that is due to them. Imagine not that they were given us for the purpose of displaying our skill in controversy; though I deny not but that we ought to combat error, and to contend earnestly for the faith delivered to the saints: but the inspired volume is holy ground: and we should "put off our shoes," as it were, whenever we enter upon it, and implore help from God, that we may be enabled to "receive it with meekness as an engrafted word," and find it effectual to save our souls.]

MMDXXXVI

THE COMING OF CHRIST DESIRED.

Rev. xxii. 20. *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

IN the Book of Revelation is contained a series of prophecies, from the apostolic age to the end of the world. To them must nothing be added: from them must nothing be withdrawn. To alter any thing contained in them is at the peril of our souls. In perfect agreement with them will every event be found at the last: the Church will triumph; her enemies will be put to shame; and the Lord Jesus Christ, into whose hands all things are committed, will be glorified in all. Speedily, too, will this desirable result appear: for "He who testifieth of these things," even the Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge of quick and dead, says, "Surely I come quickly." And his beloved Apostle, to whom he had revealed these things, welcomed the glorious consummation, saying, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Now, in these words we see Christ's coming to judgment,

I. As a period to be expected—

Of this period the whole Scriptures testify—

[In the Old Testament indeed, little, in comparison, is spoken of it: yet we can have no doubt but that it was known, not only to the descendants of Abraham, but even before the flood: for St. Jude tells us, that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied respecting it, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all^a." In the New Testament it forms a very prominent part of the inspired records; continual reference being made to that period, and the circumstances that shall then take place being fully developed. The person of the Judge, the manner of his advent, the establishment of his tribunal, the solemnities of his judgment, the final sentence which he will pronounce, and the eternal states of men fixed in perfect accordance with it, are all described, with a minuteness which

^a Jude, ver. 14, 15.

places every thing, as it were, before our eyes, and enables us to anticipate with certainty the whole process^b— — —]

And it is now fast approaching—

[Time, in our eyes, appears long: but “with God, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Our blessed Lord, when on earth, spake of it as near at hand. St. Paul adverted to it in such strong terms, that he was misunderstood by many, whose misconceptions he afterwards removed by a more plain and full declaration respecting it. Since the period that this revelation was given to John, above seventeen hundred years have elapsed: so that, if at that time it could be said by our Lord, “Surely I come quickly,” much more must it be true at this day. Even in reference to the general judgment, it is true; because the time that shall intervene before it, is no more, in comparison of eternity, than the twinkling of an eye. But, in reference to individuals, it is true, even in the most obvious and literal sense: for our time is only like a shadow that departeth, and hasteth away like the eagle in its flight. “Surely,” my beloved brethren, as it respects every one amongst us, “the Judge is at the door.” For aught that we know, we may this very day or hour be summoned into his presence, and receive at his hands our final doom — — —]

Yet, awful as the future judgment will be, we may well contemplate it,

II. As an event to be desired—

Not that it is desirable to all: for, when it shall arrive, many will call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them from the presence of their Judge. To those only can it be an object of desire, who are “prepared to meet their God.” For this high attainment three things are requisite:

1. A view of salvation, as wrought out by Christ—

[The proud self-righteous moralist can never desire that day. He may indeed so harden himself in unbelief, as to feel no dread of judgment; and so deceive his own soul, as to think that the issue of it will be favourable to him. But he cannot look forward to that event with real satisfaction. He knows not what it is to be “looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of Christ.” He has no solid ground of hope: when he reflects candidly on his state, he cannot but feel some secret misgivings, that all will not be well with him; and, consequently, he cannot really desire that day: on the contrary, it

^b Matt. xxv. 31—34.

would be a satisfaction to him to be informed that there should be no discrimination of persons, and that all should sleep a perpetual sleep.]

2. A hope of salvation, as obtained through Christ—

[It is not a mere knowledge of the Gospel that will bear up the soul in the prospect of that great event. There must be in us some consciousness that we have fled to Christ for refuge, and laid hold on the hope that is set before us. It is a small matter to us that Christ has come into the world, and died for us, if we have not somewhat of a well-grounded hope of an interest in him. When we can see the promises as freely made to us, and are enabled to rest upon them, then may we look forward with composure to the dissolution of our earthly tabernacle, and to the transmission of our souls to "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens^c."]

3. An earnest of salvation, as already enjoyed in Christ—

[This is given to many of God's favoured people: and, though I say not that it is necessary to saving faith, I must say, that without it no man can cordially adopt the language of my text, and say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." We must have some assurance of our acceptance with God, before we can really desire to enter into his presence; and some sense of an interest in Christ, before we can truly "love his appearing." But if "the Spirit of God bear witness with our spirits that we are his children," then may we number death amongst our "treasures^d," and "desire to depart, that we may be with Christ." Then may we adopt the triumphant language of the Apostle, and say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" for then our great enemy is slain, and "God has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ:" yea, "death is swallowed up in victory^e," and heaven itself is commenced in the soul.]

OBSERVE, then—

1. How sad is the prospect of those who are yet in their sins!

[Whether ye will believe it or not, know assuredly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming quickly, to call you into judgment: and to him shall ye give account, not only of your words and actions, but of the most "secret counsels of your hearts." How terrible is this thought to those who have never repented of their sins, nor ever sought for mercy through the

^c 2 Cor. v. 1.

^d 1 Cor. iii. 22.

^e Isai. xxv. 8. with 1 Cor. xv. 54—57.

Redeemer's blood! I would that I might prevail upon you, my beloved brethren, to lay to heart this awful consideration, whilst it may yet avail for your good. But let death once execute his commission, and drag you to the judgment-seat of Christ, and all your future regrets will be in vain: your sentence will then be pronounced upon you, and your doom be sealed for ever — — —]

2. What a sweet reality is there in religion !

[See what the Gospel can effect—can effect even in this present life! what peace it can bring into the soul; and what an assurance respecting its eternal interests! I will not presume to say that it will open to a man the book of God's decrees, and shew him his name written in heaven; but it will give him a confidence respecting the issue of the future judgment, and a joyful anticipation of eternal blessedness. Only therefore seek an acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, and an experience of his love; and then may you look forward to his advent with exceeding joy, and welcome it as the consummation and completion of your bliss.]

CLAUDE'S ESSAY

ON THE

COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.

P R E F A C E.

THIS Essay on the Composition of a Sermon was originally written by the Reverend John Claude, a minister of the reformed religion in France, who preached upwards of forty years with great acceptance, first at St. Afrique, afterwards at Nismes, and lastly at Charenton.

The Editor has bestowed considerable pains on it to improve it. To distinguish his additions from the original, he has enclosed them in brackets. For the elucidation of different parts, he has made several references to his own Discourses.

The Editor, conceiving it of importance to illustrate the four different methods of treating texts, viz. by Explication, by Observations, by Propositions, and by perpetual Application, here adds four distinct specimens, all of them upon the same text. And in the second of them he has illustrated Mr. Claude's twenty-seven topics, with a particular reference to each. He hopes this will be an acceptable addition to the Student.

If any Student choose to undertake the same task, 1 John v. 11, 12. will afford him good scope for the purpose.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE CHOICE OF TEXTS.

THERE are in general *five* parts of a sermon, the exordium, the connexion, the division, the discussion, and the application: but, as connexion and division are parts which ought to be extremely short, we can properly reckon only *three* parts; exordium, discussion, and application. However, we will just take notice of connexion and division after we have spoken a little on the choice of texts, and on a few general rules of discussing them.

1. *Never choose such texts as have not a complete sense*; for only impertinent and foolish people will attempt to preach from one or two words, which signify nothing.

2. Not only *words* which have a complete sense of themselves must be taken: but they *must* also *include the complete sense of the writer*, whose words they are: for it is his language, and they are his sentiments, which you explain. For example, should you take these words of 2 Cor. i. 3, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort," and stop here, you would include a complete sense: but it would not be the Apostle's sense. Should you go farther, and add, "who comforteth us in all our tribulation," it would not then be the complete sense of St. Paul, nor would his meaning be wholly taken in, unless

you went on to the end of the fourth verse. When the complete sense of the sacred writer is taken, you may stop; for there are few texts in Scripture, which do not afford matter sufficient for a sermon; and it is equally inconvenient to take too much text, or too little; both extremes must be avoided.

When *too little* text is taken, you must digress from the subject to find something to say; flourishes of wit and imagination must be displayed, which are not of the genius of the pulpit: and, in one word, it will make the hearers think, that self is more preached than Jesus Christ; and that the preacher aims rather at appearing a wit, than at instructing and edifying his people.

When *too much* text is taken, either many important considerations, which belong to the passage, must be left out, or a tedious prolixity must follow. A proper measure, therefore, must be chosen, and neither too little, nor too much matter taken. Some say, preaching is designed only to make Scripture understood, and therefore they take a great deal of text, and are content with giving the sense, and with making some principal reflections: but this is a mistake; for preaching is not only intended to give the sense of Scripture, but also of theology in general; and, in short, to explain the whole of religion, which cannot be done, if too much matter be taken; so that, I think, the manner commonly used in our churches is the most reasonable, and the most conformable to the end of preaching. Every body can read Scripture with notes and comments to obtain simply the sense: but we cannot instruct, solve difficulties, unfold mysteries, penetrate into the ways of divine wisdom, establish truth, refute error, comfort, correct, and censure, fill the hearers with an admiration of the wonderful works and ways of God, inflame their souls with zeal, powerfully incline them to piety and holiness, which are the ends of preaching, unless we go farther than barely enabling them to understand Scripture.

To be more particular, regard must be paid to circumstances, times, places, and persons, and texts must be chosen relative to them. 1st, In regard to *times*. I do not, I cannot, approve of the custom of the late Mons. Daillé, who used to preach on the feast-days of the Church of Rome, and to choose texts on the subjects of their feasts, turning them to censure superstition: I do not blame his zeal against superstition: but as for the Romish feasts, they are for the members of the Church

of Rome, and not for us; and, it is certain, our hearers will neither be instructed nor encouraged by such sorts of subjects: methinks they should be preached seldom, and soberly. It is not so with particular times, which belong to ourselves, which are of two sorts, *ordinary*, which we call *stata tempora*, which every year return at the same seasons; or *extraordinary*, which fall out by accident, or, to speak more properly, when it pleases God. Of the first kind are Lord's supper-days; or days which are solemnized amongst us, as Christmas-day, Easter, Whitsuntide, Ascension-day, New-year's-day, and Good-Friday, as it is called. On these days particular texts should be chosen, which suit the service of the day; for it would discover great negligence to take on such days texts which have no relation to them. It is not to be questioned but on these days peculiar efforts ought to be made, because then the hearers come with raised expectations, which, if not satisfied, turn into contempt, and a kind of indignation against the preacher.

Particular days not fixed, but *occasional*, are fast-days, ordination-days, days on which the flock must be extraordinarily comforted, either on account of the falling out of some great scandal, the exercise of some great affliction, or the inflicting of some great censure. On fast-days, it is plain, particular texts must be expressly chosen for the purpose: but on other occasions it must rest on the preacher's judgment; for most texts may be used extraordinarily, to comfort, exhort, or censure; and, except the subject in hand be extremely important, the safest way is not to change the usual text^a. For ordination-days extraordinary texts and agreeable to the subject in hand must be taken, whether it regards the ordainer, or the ordained; for very often he, who is ordained in the morning, preaches in the afternoon.

I add one word touching sermons in strange Churches. 1. Do not choose a *text which appears odd*, or the choice of which vanity may be supposed to dictate. 2. Do not choose a *text of censure*; for a stranger has no business to censure a congregation which he does not inspect: unless he have a particular call to it, being either sent by a synod, or entreated by the church itself. In such a case the censure must be

^a Perhaps by *texte accoutumé* Mr. Claude means such a text as would come in a precomposed *set of sermons*, or to a series of texts published by authority.

conducted with wisdom and tempered with sweetness.—Nor, 3. Choose a *text leading to curious knotty questions*; then it would be said, the man meant to preach himself. But, 4. Choose a text of ordinary doctrine, in discussing which, doctrine and morality may be mixed, and let moral things be said rather by way of exhortation and consolation than by way of censure: not that the vicious should not be censured; for reproof is *essential* to preaching: but it must be given soberly, and in general terms, when we are not with our own flocks.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL RULES OF SERMONS.

ALTHOUGH the following general rules are well known, yet they are too little practised: they ought, however, to be constantly regarded.

1. A sermon should *clearly* and purely *explain a text*, make the sense easy to be comprehended, and place things before the people's eyes, so that they may be understood without difficulty. This rule condemns embarrassment and *obscurity*, the most disagreeable thing in the world in a gospel-pulpit. It ought to be remembered, that the greatest part of the hearers are simple people, whose profit, however, must be aimed at in preaching: but it is impossible to edify them, unless you be very clear. As to learned hearers, it is certain they will always prefer a clear before an obscure sermon; for, first, they will consider the simple, nor will their benevolence be content if the illiterate be not edified; and next, they will be loth to be driven to the necessity of giving too great an attention, which they cannot avoid, if the preacher be obscure. The minds of men, whether learned or ignorant, generally avoid pain; and the learned have fatigue enough in the study, without increasing it at church.

2. A sermon must give *the entire sense of the whole text*, in order to which it must be considered in every view. This rule condemns *dry and barren explications*, wherein the preacher discovers neither study nor invention, and leaves unsaid a great number of beautiful things with which his text would have furnished him. Preachments of this kind are extremely disgusting; the mind is neither elevated, nor informed; nor is

the heart at all moved. In matters of religion and piety, not to edify much, is to destroy much : and a sermon *cold* and *poor* will do more mischief in an hour, than a hundred rich sermons can do good. I do not mean, that a preacher should always use his utmost efforts, nor that he should always preach alike well ; for that neither can nor ought to be. There are extraordinary occasions, for which all his vigour must be reserved. But I mean, that, in ordinary and usual sermons, a kind of plenitude should satisfy and content the hearers. The preacher must not always labour to carry the people beyond themselves, nor to ravish them into ecstasies ; but he must always satisfy them, and maintain in them an esteem and an eagerness for practical piety.

3. The preacher must be *wise, sober, chaste*. I say *wise*, in opposition to those impertinent people, who utter jests, comical comparisons, quirks, and extravagancies ; and such are a great part of the preachers of the church of Rome. I say *sober*, in opposition to those rash spirits, who would penetrate all, and curiously dive into mysteries beyond the bounds of modesty. Such are those, who make no difficulty of delivering in the pulpit all the speculations of the schools, on the mystery of the Trinity, the incarnation, the eternal reprobation of mankind ; such as treat of questions beyond our knowledge ; *viz.* What would have been if Adam had abode in innocence ; what the state of souls after death ; or what the resurrection, and our state of eternal glory in paradise. Such are they, who fill their sermons with the different interpretations of a term, or the different opinions of interpreters on any passage of Scripture ; who load their hearers with tedious recitals of ancient history ; or an account of the divers heresies which have troubled the Church upon any matter ; all these are contrary to the sobriety of which we speak, and which is one of the most excellent pulpit virtues. I say farther *chaste*, in opposition to those bold and impudent geniuses who are not ashamed of saying many things which produce unclean ideas in the mind. A preacher cannot be called chaste, who, speaking of the conception of Jesus Christ in the virgin's womb by the power of the Holy Ghost without the intervention of man, is not careful of saying any thing, that may shock the modesty of some, and give occasion of discourse to the profanity of others. There are I know not how many subjects of this kind ; as when the eternal *generation* of Jesus Christ the Son

of God is spoken of; when the term *regeneration* is explained, which Scripture useth to express our conversion; or when we treat of that *seed* of God, of which, according to St. John, we are born; or when we enforce the *duties* of husbands to wives, or of wives to husbands; or when we speak of the *love* of Jesus Christ to his Church, under the notion of a *conjugal* relation; or when eternal felicity is spoken of under the image of a *banquet*, or of a *marriage-feast*. On all such subjects, chastity should weigh the expressions, and make a judicious choice, in order to keep the hearers' minds at the greatest distance from all sorts of carnal and terrestrial ideas. The likeliest way of succeeding in these cases is to beware of pressing metaphorical terms too far; to adhere to general considerations, and if possible to explain the metaphorical terms in few words, and afterwards to cleave entirely to the thing itself.

4. A preacher must be *simple* and *grave*. *Simple*, speaking things full of good natural sense without metaphysical speculations; for none are more impertinent than they, who deliver in the pulpit abstract speculations, definitions in form, and scholastic questions, which they pretend to derive from their texts;—as, on the manner of the existence of angels; the means whereby they communicate their ideas to each other; the manner in which ideas eternally subsist in the Divine understanding; with many more of the same class, all certainly opposite to simplicity. To simple I add *grave*, because all sorts of mean thoughts and expressions, all sorts of vulgar and proverbial sayings, ought to be avoided. The pulpit is the seat of good natural sense; and the good sense of good men. On the one hand then, you are not to philosophize too much, and refine your subject out of sight; nor, on the other, to abase yourself to the language and thoughts of the dregs of the people.

5. The understanding must be informed, but in a manner, however, which *affects the heart*; either to comfort the hearers, or to excite them to acts of piety, repentance, or holiness. There are two ways of doing this, one formal, in turning the subject to moral uses, and so applying it to the hearers; the other in the simple choice of the things spoken; for if they be good, solid, evangelic, and edifying of themselves, should no application be formally made, the auditors would make it themselves; because subjects of this kind, are of such a nature,

that they cannot enter the understanding without penetrating the heart. I do not blame the method of some preachers, who, when they have opened some point of doctrine, or made some important observation, immediately turn it into a brief moral application to the hearers; this M. Daillé frequently did: yet I think it should not be made a constant practice, because, 1st, what the hearer is used to, he will be prepared for, and so it will lose its effect; and 2dly, because you would thereby interrupt your explication, and consequently also the attention of the hearer, which is a great inconvenience. Nevertheless, when it is done but seldom, and seasonably, great advantage may be reaped.

But there is another way of turning doctrines to moral uses, which in my opinion is far more excellent, authoritative, grand and effectual; that is, by treating the doctrine contained in the text, in a way of *perpetual application*. This way produces excellent effects, for it pleases, instructs, and affects all together. But neither must this be made habitual, for it would fatigue the hearer, nothing being more delicate, nor sooner discouraged than the human mind. There are fast-days, Lord's-supper-days, and many such seasonable times for this method. This way, as I have said, is full of admirable fruits; but it must be well executed, with power and address, with choice of thoughts and expressions, otherwise the preacher will make himself ridiculous, and provoke the people to say,

“ Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu?
Parturiunt montes; nascetur ridiculus mus.”

6. One of the most important precepts for the discussion of a text, and the composition of a sermon, is, above all things, to avoid excess: *Ne quid nimis*.

1. There must not be too much *genius*; I mean, not too many brilliant, sparkling, and striking things; for they would produce very bad effects. The auditor will never fail to say, The man preaches himself, aims to display his genius, and is not animated by the Spirit of God, but by that of the world. Besides, the hearer would be overcharged; the mind of man has its bounds and measures, and as the eye is dazzled with too strong a light, so is the mind offended with the glare of too great an assemblage of beauties. Farther, it would destroy the principal end of preaching, which is to sanctify the conscience; for when the mind is overloaded with too many

agreeable ideas, it has not leisure to reflect on the objects; and without reflection the heart is unaffected. Moreover, ideas which divert the mind, are not very proper to move the conscience; they flatter the imagination, and that is all. Such a preacher will oblige people to say of him, He has genius, a lively and fruitful imagination: but he is not solid. In fine, it is not possible for a man, who piques himself on filling his sermons with vivacities of imagination, to maintain the spirit all along; he will therefore become a tiresome tautologist: nor is it hard in such sermons to discover many false brilliances, as we see daily.

2. A sermon must not be *overcharged with doctrine*, because the hearers' memories cannot retain it all, and by aiming to keep all, they will lose all; and because you will be obliged either to be excessively tedious, or to propose the doctrine in a dry, barren, scholastic manner, which will deprive it of all its beauty and efficacy. A sermon should instruct, please, and affect; that is, it should always do these as much as possible. As the doctrinal part, which is instructive, should always be proposed in an agreeable and *affecting* manner; so the agreeable parts should be proposed in an *instructive* manner: and even in the conclusion, which is designed wholly to affect, agreeableness must not be neglected, nor altogether instruction. Take care then not to charge your sermon with too much matter.

3. Care must also be taken *never to strain any particular part*, either in attempting to exhaust it, or to penetrate too far into it. If you aim at exhausting a subject, you will be obliged to heap up a number of common things without choice or discernment: if at penetrating, you cannot avoid falling into many curious questions, and unedifying subtilties; and frequently in attempting it you will distil the subject till it evaporates.

4. *Figures must not be overstrained*. This is done by stretching metaphor into allegory, or by carrying a parallel too far. A metaphor is changed into an allegory, when a number of things are heaped up, which agree to the subject, in keeping close to the metaphor. As in explaining this text, *God is a sun and a shield*; it would be stretching the metaphor into an allegory to make a great collection of what God is in himself; what to us; what he does in the understanding and conscience of the believer; what he operates on the wicked; what his

absence causeth ; and all these under terms, which had a perpetual relation to the *sun*. Allegories may be sometimes used very agreeably : but they must not be strained, that is, all that can be said on them must not be said. A parallel is run too far, when a great number of conformities between the figure, and the thing represented by the figure, are heaped together. This is almost the perpetual vice of mean and low preachers ; for when they catch a figurative word, or a metaphor, as when God's word is called a *fire*, or a *sword* ; or the church a *house*, or a *dove* ; or Jesus Christ a *light*, a *sun*, a *vine*, or a *door* ; they never fail making a long detail of conformities between the figures and the subjects themselves ; and frequently say ridiculous things. This vice must be avoided, and you must be content to explain the metaphor in a few words, and to mark the principal agreements, in order afterward to cleave to the thing itself.

5. *Reasoning must not be carried too far.* This may be done many ways ; either by long trains of reasons, composed of a quantity of propositions chained together, or principles and consequences, which way of reasoning is embarrassing and painful to the auditor ; or by making many branches of reasons, and establishing them one after another, which is tiresome and fatiguing to the mind. The mind of man loves to be conducted in a more smooth and easy way ; all must not be proved at once ; but, supposing principles, which are true and plain, and which you, when it is necessary, are capable of proving and supporting, you must be content with using them to prove what you have in hand. Yet I do not mean, that in reasoning, arguments should be so short and dry, and proposed in so brief a manner, as to divest the truth of half its force, as many authors leave them. I only mean, that a due medium should be preserved ; that is, that without fatiguing the mind and attention of the hearer, reasons should be placed in just as much force and clearness, as are necessary to produce the effect.

Reasoning also may be overstrained by heaping great numbers of proofs on the same subject. Numerous proofs are intolerable, except in a principal matter, which is like to be much questioned or controverted by the hearers. In such a case you would be obliged to treat the subject fully and *ex professo* ; otherwise the hearers would consider your attempt to prove the matter as an useless digression. But when you

are obliged to treat a subject fully, when that subject is very important, when it is doubted and controverted, then a great number of proofs are proper. In such a case you must propose to convince and bear down the opponent's judgment, by making truth triumph in many different manners. In such a case, many proofs associated together to produce one effect, are like many rays of light, which naturally strengthen each other, and which altogether form a body of brightness which is irresistible.

6. You must, as much as possible, abstain from *all sorts of observations foreign from theology*. In this class I place,

1. *Grammatical observations* of every kind, which, not being within the people's knowledge, can only weary and disgust them. They may nevertheless be used when they furnish an agreeable sense of the word, or open some important observation on the subject itself, provided it be done very seldom and very pertinently.

2. *Critical observations* about different readings, different punctuations, &c. must be avoided. Make all the use you can of critical knowledge yourself; but spare the people the account, for it must needs be very disagreeable to them.

I add, 3dly, *Avoid philosophical and historical observations*, and all such as belong to *rhetoric*; or, if you do use them, do not insist on them, and choose only those which give either some light to the text, or heighten its pathos and beauty; all others must be rejected.

Lastly, I say the same of passages from *profane authors*, or *rabbies*, or *fathers*, with which many think they enrich their sermons. This farrago is only a vain ostentation of learning, and very often they who fill their sermons with such quotations, know them only by relation of others. However, I would not blame a man who should use them discreetly. A quotation not common, and properly made, has a very good effect.

CHAPTER III.

OF CONNEXION.

THE connexion is the relation of your text to the foregoing or following verses. To find this, consider the scope of the discourse, and consult commentators; particularly exercise

your own good sense; for commentators frequently trifle, and give forced and far-fetched connexions, all which ought to be avoided, for they are not natural, and sometimes good sense will discover the scope and design of a passage far better than this kind of writers.

There are texts, the connexions of which (I own) it will be sometimes difficult to perceive. In such a case endeavour to discover them by frequent and intense meditation, or take that which commentators furnish; and among many which they give, choose that which appears most natural; and if you can find none likely, the best way will be to let the passage alone. The connexion is a part which must be very little insisted on, because the hearers almost always pass it over, and receive but little instruction from it.

When the coherence will furnish any agreeable considerations for the illustration of the text, they must be put in the discussion; and this will very often happen. Sometimes also you may draw thence an exordium: in such a case the exordium and connexion will be confounded together.

[There is however one point in relation to the connexion, to which very especial attention should be paid: and it is this: the text should always be *taken according to the precise sense which it bears in connexion with the context; and be always treated in that precise view.* For, in addition to this being far more satisfactory to the audience, it will give an inexhaustible variety to the subjects, and infuse into every one of them a force and a spirit, which nothing else could impart.]

CHAPTER IV.

OF DIVISION.

DIVISION, in general, ought to be restrained to a small number of parts: they should never exceed four or five at the most: the more admired sermons have only two or three parts.

There are two sorts of divisions, which we may very properly make; the first, which is the most common, is the division of the *text* into its parts; the other is of the *discourse*, or sermon itself, which is made on the text.

This last, that is to say, the *division of a discourse*, is proper, when, to give light to a text, it is necessary to mention many things, which the text supposes but does not formally express;

and which must be collected elsewhere, in order to enable you to give in the end a just explication of the text. In such a case you may divide your *discourse* into two parts, the first containing some *general considerations* necessary for understanding the text; and the second, the *particular explication* of the text itself.

1. This method is proper when a *prophecy of the Old Testament* is handled; for, generally, the understanding of these prophecies depends on many general considerations, which, by exposing and refuting false senses, open a way to the true explication; as appears by what has been said on Gen. iii. 15^a. “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel;” and on the covenant made with Abraham, &c. &c.^b

[Agreeably to the different description given to this mode of treating subjects, namely, as being *topical* in contradistinction to *textual*, I would call this topic, “*The first prophecy relating to the redemption of fallen man.*” And, in order to bring forward the general considerations proper for the elucidation of the text, Gen. iii. 15, it might be treated in some such way as this: 1. The occasion on which this prophecy was given, (here state the fall of Adam, and the condition of guilt, and misery, and helplessness, to which he was reduced.) 2. The prophecy itself, in which must be marked, first, the import of it; and then its accomplishment in the death of Christ.]

2. This method is also proper on a *text taken from a dispute*, the understanding of which must depend on the state of the question, the hypotheses of adversaries, and the principles of the inspired writers. All these lights are previously necessary, and they can only be given by general considerations: for example, Rom. iii. 28, “We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Some general considerations must precede, which clear up the *state of the question* between St. Paul and the Jews, touching justification; which mark the *hypothesis* of the Jews upon that subject, and which discover the *true principle* which St. Paul would establish; so that in the end the text may be clearly understood.

^a See on Gen. iii. 15.

^b These general considerations might properly enough form the *exordium*.

[This topic might be called, *St. Paul's argument on the subject of justification by faith*. And the text, Rom. iii. 28, might be treated thus: 1. The argument of St. Paul on this all-important subject, (here the grounds of his argument and the various steps of it might be stated:) 2. The conclusion founded upon it, (in this, the truth and importance of the conclusion might be opened and enforced.)]

3. This method also is proper in a *conclusion drawn from a long preceding discourse*; as for example, Rom. v. 1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Some think that, to manage this text well, we ought not to speak of *justification* by faith; but only of that *peace* which we have with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. I grant, we ought not to make justification the chief part of the sermon: but the text is a conclusion drawn by the Apostle from the preceding discourse; and we shall deceive ourselves, if we imagine this dispute between St. Paul and the Jews so well known to the people, that it is needless to speak of it; they are not, in general, so well acquainted with Scripture. The *discourse* then must be divided into two parts, the first consisting of some *general considerations* on the doctrine of justification, which St. Paul establishes in the preceding chapters; and the second, of his *conclusion*, "That," being thus justified, "we have peace with God," &c.

[A more simple way would be to consider, 1. The Apostle's argument, That all were fallen and needed a Saviour.—That God had provided such a Saviour as was wanted.—That all the most eminent saints had been justified solely by faith in him.—2. His conclusion, That there is peace for *us* through Christ—and, that that peace must be obtained simply by faith, both in our first acceptance with him; and in our subsequent life and conversation.]

The same may be said of the first verse of the eighth of Romans, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" for it is a consequence drawn from what he had been establishing before, [or of Rom. ix. 19—23. Which might be treated thus: 1. The point at issue between the objector and St. Paul. 2. The Apostle's determination of it (in a way of just reprehension—and of sound argument:) 3. The proper improvement of the subject.]

4. The same method is proper for *texts* which are *quoted* in the New Testament *from the Old*. You must prove, by *general considerations*, that the text is properly produced, and then you may come clearly to its explication. Of this kind are Heb. i. 5, 6, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son:" ii. 6, "One in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" iii. 7, "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." There are many passages of this kind in the New Testament, [See on Heb. ii. 6—8.]

5. In this class must be placed divisions into *different respects*, or *different views*. These, to speak properly, are not divisions of a text into its parts, but rather different applications, which are made of the same text to divers subjects. *Typical texts* should be divided thus: and a great number of *passages in the Psalms*, which relate not only to David, but also to Jesus Christ; such should be considered first literally, as they relate to David; and then in their mystical sense, as they refer to the Lord Jesus. [See on Exod. xxxiv. 35, where Moses puts on the veil, 1. As a kind expedient; 2. As an instructive emblem.]

There are also typical passages, which, beside their literal senses, have also figurative meanings, relating not only to Jesus Christ, but also to the Church in general, and to every believer in particular; or which have different degrees of their mystical accomplishment.

For example, Dan. ix. 7, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face as at this day:" (which is a very proper text for a fast-day,) must not be divided into *parts*; but considered in *different views*. 1. In regard to *all men* in general. 2. In regard to the *Jewish Church in Daniel's time*. And, 3. In regard to *ourselves at this present day*.

So again, Heb. iii. 7, 8, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness," (which is taken from the ninety-fifth Psalm, and which also is very proper for a day of censure or fasting,) cannot be better divided than by referring it, 1. To David's time. 2. St. Paul's. And, lastly, to our own^c.

^c See on John xix. 23, 24. or John xix. 26, 27. or on Acts ix. 3—6.

As to the *division of the text* itself, sometimes the order of the words is so clear and natural, that no division is necessary;^d you need only follow simply the order of the words. As for example, Eph. i. 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ." It is not necessary to divide this text, because the words divide themselves; and to explain them we need only follow them. Here is a grateful acknowledgment, "Blessed be God." The title under which the Apostle blesses God, "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The reason for which he blesses him, because "he hath blessed us." The plenitude of this blessing, "with all blessings." The nature or kind, signified by the term "spiritual." The place, where he hath blessed us, "in heavenly places." In whom he hath blessed us, "in Christ." Remark, as you go on, that there is a manifest allusion to the first blessing, wherewith God blessed his creatures, when he first created them, Gen. i. For as in the first creation he made all things for his own glory, Prov. xvi. 4, "The Lord hath made all things for himself;" so in this new creation, the end, and perpetual exercise of the believer, ought to be to "bless and glorify God." All things in nature bless God as their Creator: but we bless him as "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." God blessed the creation immediately, because it was his own work: here, in like manner, he blesses us, because we are his own new creation; "We are," says the Apostle, "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," chap. ii. 10. *There* the Lord divided his blessing, giving to every creature a different blessing; he said *to the earth*, "Bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit:" *to the fishes* of the sea, and *to the fowls* of the air, "Be fruitful and multiply;" and *to man* he said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion:" *Here*, believers have every one his whole blessing, for each possesseth it entirely. The creatures then received but an imperfect blessing: but we have received one as full and entire as God could communicate to creatures. Their blessing was in the order of nature a temporal blessing: ours in the order of grace a *spiritual* blessing. *There* upon earth; *here* in heavenly places. *There* in Adam; *here* in Christ.

^d See on Jer. viii. 4—8.

It may also be remarked, that the Apostle alludes to the blessing of Abraham, to whom God said, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed;" and a comparison may very well be made of the temporal blessings of the Israelites, with those spiritual benefits, which we receive by Jesus Christ.

[The Editor considers the preceding illustration as by no means proper, because *the subject* is lost sight of through an undue attention to *the words*. He would never on any consideration whatever have *the subject* frittered away in this manner: he would substitute in its place either such an exposition as that on Luke xii. 4, 5. Eph. i. 3—12, or the following on 1 Pet. v. 10, 11, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

We would call your attention to this *most endearing character of God*. (Whatever grace you need, he is the God of that very grace as much as if his whole nature consisted in it.) But, not to rest in this view of what he is in himself, we would lead you especially to contemplate *the displays which he has already given you of his grace* (Go, my Son, and die for them, and invite them to a participation of my glory: and Go, my Spirit, reveal my Son in them, and by thine influence draw them unto me.) *Do not however imagine that any sufferings you may experience in the way to glory, at all derogate from his grace*. (They are permitted for your good: and they are even sent as tokens of his love, and as most honourable marks of distinction.) See what is *the end he aims at in all his dispensations towards you* (as the oak by tempests is made to take root, so are you strengthened by your trials, and by the grace imparted under them.) And now *what is the disposition of your minds towards this gracious God?* (Methinks, it accords with the Apostle's; "To him be," &c. Methinks, every mouth and every heart already attests this by a silent, but devout, Amen.)

Here, it will be perceived, *the subject is adhered to*, at the same time that the order of the words is followed. If this be not done, the whole sermon will be mere rhapsody.]

Most texts, however, ought to be formally divided; for which purpose you must principally have regard to the order of nature, and put that division, which naturally precedes, in

the first place; and the rest must follow, each in its proper order. This may easily be done by reducing the text to a categorical proposition, beginning with the subject, passing to the attribute, and then to the other terms; your judgment will direct you how to place them.

If, for example, I were to preach from Heb. x. 10, "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all;" I should not think it proper to speak first of the will of God, then of our sanctification, and, lastly, of the cause of our sanctification, which is, the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ: it would be much better to reduce the text to a categorical proposition; thus, *The offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once made, sanctifies us by the will of God*; for it is more natural to consider, 1. The nearer and more *immediate cause* of our acceptance, which is, *the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ*; 2. Its *effect*, our *sanctification*; 3. Its first and more *remote cause*, which makes it produce this effect, *the will of God*.

[The Editor wishes the student to pause here, and to avail himself fully of the hint just thrown out, of *reducing a subject to a categorical proposition*, and then treating it in its natural order.

This is, in fact, *the great secret*, (so to speak,) of all composition for the pulpit. Every text, whether long or short, must be reduced to a categorical proposition; 1st, In order to preserve a perfect unity in the subject; and, 2dly, in order to take it up, and prosecute it in an orderly manner.

The manner of reducing every thing to a simple proposition is here well illustrated. If the passage contain a great diversity of matter, the simple proposition should declare *its main scope only*; and the other points which are contained in the text, should be no further noticed, than as they elucidate the one great point which is intended to be considered.

THE RULES WHICH THE EDITOR WOULD GIVE FOR THE
COMPOSITION OF A SERMON, ARE THESE.

1. Take for your subject that which you believe to be the mind of God in the passage before you.
(Be careful to understand the passage thoroughly: and regard nothing but the mind of God in it.)
2. Mark *the character* of the passage.

(It may be more simple, as a declaration, a precept, a promise, a threatening, an invitation, an appeal; or more complex, as a cause and effect; a principle, and a consequence; an action, and a motive to that action, and, whatever be *the character of the text*, (especially if it be clearly marked) *let that direct you in the arrangement of your discourse upon it.* (See what Mr. Claude says near the beginning of Chap. V.)

For instance. 1 John iv. 18, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth, is not made perfect in love."

This passage should not be treated in a common-place way of shewing, 1st. What this love is; 2d. What is the fear which it casts out; and 3d. How it casts out this fear. The passage is intended to shew *the influence* of the love of God upon the soul, and to set it forth as *a test* of our attainments in true piety; and therefore the scope and intent of it should be seized as the groundwork of the division. Thus—Consider the love of God: 1. Its influence as a principle (casting out all slavish fear;) and, 2. Its importance as a test; (enabling us, by means of its influence in this respect, to estimate the precise measure of our attainments.) See the arrangement of Rev. xix. 6.

3. Mark *the spirit* of the passage.

(It may be tender and compassionate, or indignant, or menacing: but whatever it be, let *that be the spirit of your discourse.* To be tender on an indignant passage, or indignant on one that is tender, would destroy half the force and beauty of the discourse. The soul should be filled with the subject, and breathe out the very spirit of it before the people. As God's ambassadors, we should speak all that he speaks; and *as he speaks it.* God himself should be heard in us and through us.)

The true *meaning* of the text should *be the warp*, which pervades the whole piece: and the *words* should *be the woof* that is to be interwoven, so as to form one connected and continued whole.

The spirit of the words should pervade the discourse upon them. Whatever peculiarity there be either in the matter or manner of the text, that should be transfused into the discourse, and bear the same measure of prominence in the sermon, as it bears in the text itself.

Take for instance, Ps. cxlvii. 11, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy;" you would give *the sense* of the text, if you were to set forth, 1st. The characters described, and, 2d. God's favour towards them: but if you were to shew from that text, 1st. *How low God descends for the objects of his favour*; and, 2d. *How high he soars in his regards towards them*; you would mark, and every one of your audience would feel, *the spirit* of them. If the reader consult the discourse on John i. 45, he will find that the spirit of the text, that is, *the joy expressed in it*, serves as a foundation for one half of the discourse. So also if he will consult the discourse on Jer. v. 23, 24, he will find that *the spirit* of that text gives the entire tone to the subject. The common way of treating that text would be to consider, 1. The mercies which God has vouchsafed to us, and, 2. The effect which they ought to produce upon us. But with such a division of the subject the *vituperative spirit* of it would be comparatively lost^c.

If these few hints be thoroughly understood and duly attended to, the composition of a sermon, which is supposed to be so difficult, will become extremely easy. And the Editor cannot render the student a greater service, than by entreating him to fix these short rules deeply in his mind, and when studying for the pulpit, carefully to seize the *sense*, the *character*, and the *spirit* of his text.]

It remains to be observed, that there are two natural orders, one natural in regard to subjects themselves, the other natural in regard to us. The first considers every thing in its natural situation, as things are *in themselves*, without any regard to our knowledge of them; the other, which I call natural *in regard to us*, observes the situation, which things have as they appear in our minds, or enter into our thoughts. For example, in the last-mentioned text, the natural order of *things* would require the proposition thus: By the will of God the offering of the body of Christ sanctifies us; for, 1. The will of God is the decree of his good pleasure to send his Son into the world; 2. The oblation of Jesus Christ is the first effect of this will; and, 3. Our sanctification is the last effect of his oblation by the will of God. On the contrary, the natural order in regard

^c See on Dan. v. 22. or 1 Thess. iv. 1.

to us is, 1. The offering; 2. The sanctification, which it produces; and, lastly, The will of God, which gives it this efficacy.

When in any text the natural order of things differs from that which regards our knowledge of them, we may take that way which we like best; however, I believe, it would be best to follow that of our knowledge, because it is easiest, and clearest for the common people.

[Jam. i. 18, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures," speaks of the conversion of souls to God: and it might be taken in either way, In its *natural order as it is in itself*, thus: 1. The source from whence conversion flows, 2. The means by which it is effected, 3. The end for which it is wrought. Or, in the order which is *natural in regard to us*, thus: 1. God's design respecting his people. (That they may be consecrated to him, as the first-fruits were:) 2. The way in which he effects it (He begets them by his word and spirit:) 3. The true source and origin of this mercy (His own sovereign will and pleasure.) But the order which is *natural with regard to us* is preferable; and will be found both more easy and more instructive than the other.]

There are texts, which contain the end and the means; the cause and the effect; the principle, and the consequence deduced from the principle; the action, and the principle of the action; the occasion, and the motive of the occasion: in these cases it is arbitrary either to begin with the means, and afterwards treat of the end; with the effect, and proceed to the cause, and so on; or to follow the contrary order. For instance, 2 Tim. ii. 10, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ, with eternal glory." It is plain, that the text has three parts: the *sufferings* of the Apostle; the *end* he proposes; and the *principle*, from which he proposes this end. The order is then arbitrary: you may either speak, first of St. Paul's *love* to the elect; secondly, of the *salvation*, which he desired they might obtain in Jesus Christ; and, thirdly, of the *sufferings*, which he endured in order to their obtaining it; or, first, of his *sufferings*; secondly, of the *end*, which he proposed in them, the salvation of the elect with eternal glory; and, thirdly, of his *love* for the elect, which is the principle.

But though, in general, you may follow which of the two

orders you please, yet there are some texts that determine the division; as Phil. ii. 13, "It is God who worketh effectually in you, both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure." There are, it is plain, three things to be discussed; the *action* of God's grace upon men, *God worketh effectually in you*; the *effect* of this grace, *to will and to do*; and the *spring* or source of the action, according to *his good pleasure*. I think the division would not be proper if we were to treat, 1. Of God's *pleasure*; 2. Of his *grace*; and, 3. Of the *will* and *works* of men. I should rather begin with volition and action, which are the *effects* of grace; then I should speak of the *grace* itself, which produces willing and doing in us effectually; and, lastly, of the *source* of this grace, which is the good pleasure of God. In short, it is always necessary to consult good sense, and never to be so conducted by general rules as not to attend to particular circumstances.

Above all things, in divisions, take care of putting any thing in the first part, which supposes the understanding of the second, or which obliges you to treat of the second, to make the first understood; for by these means you will throw yourself into a great confusion, and be obliged to make many tedious repetitions. You must endeavour to disengage the one from the other as well as you can; and when your parts are too closely connected with each other, place the most detached first, and endeavour to make that serve for a foundation to the explication of the second, and the second to the third; so that at the end of your explication the hearer may with a glance perceive, as it were, a perfect body, or a finished building; for one of the greatest excellences of a sermon is, the harmony of its component parts, that the first leads to the second, the second serves to introduce the third; that they which go before, excite a desire for those which are to follow: and, in a word, that the last has a special relation to all the others, in order to form in the hearers' minds a complete idea of the whole.

This cannot be done with all sorts of texts, but with those only which are proper to form such a design upon. Remember too, it is not enough to form such a plan, it must also be happily executed.

You will often find it necessary in texts, which you reduce to categorical propositions, to treat of the *subject*, as well as of the attribute: then you must make of the subject one part.

This will always happen, when the subject of the proposition is expressed in terms that want explaining, or which furnish many considerations: For example; "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." This is a categorical proposition, and you must needs treat of the subject, *he who abides in Jesus Christ, and in whom Jesus Christ abides*. So again, "He that believeth in me, hath everlasting life." "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The two last ought to be reduced to categorical propositions, the subjects of which are, *they who are in Christ*. In these, and in all others of the same kind, the subject must make one part, and must also be considered first; for it is more natural, as well as most agreeable to the rules of logic, to begin with the subject of a proposition. Sometimes it is necessary not only to make one part of the subject, and another of the attribute; but also to *make a third of the connexion of the subject with the attribute*. In this case, you may say, after you have observed in the first place the subject, and in the second the attribute, that you will consider in the third the *entire sense of the whole proposition*: this must be done in these texts; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "He that believeth in me hath eternal life," &c.

[This needs clearer elucidation. Take 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Here is delineated the Christian's character: and it would be proper to consider, 1. The disposition he cultivates; (heavenly-mindedness:) 2. The privilege he enjoys; (to have his afflictions sanctified:) 3. The connexion. (It is the disposition that makes the affliction light; which would otherwise be heavy; and that brings the blessing of God upon it; which otherwise it would not have.

The two first heads alone are expressly mentioned in the text: but, without the third, they would have no unity: whereas the third head consolidates them into one important subject.

There are occasions whereon *the connexion* between the parts of a text *may make the entire subject of the discourse*. For instance, Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6, "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that goeth on his way weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him:" Here you might notice, 1. The events connected; and 2. The certainty and blessedness of this connexion. Under the first head you might shew, that tears are the proper seed for a Christian to sow; and that he is constantly sowing them; and under the second head you might shew, that in the text the affirmation is repeated; and then confirmed by the word, "doubtless:" and that the joys of heaven would amply recompense the sorrows of this transient world.

N. B. The reader is desired very particularly to consult the *first note* in the Discourse on 1 John ii. 15—17. *In that note he will see the vast importance of bringing forth in a prominent way the connexion on some occasions.*]

Sometimes there are, in texts reduced to categorical propositions, terms which, in the schools, are called syncategorematica; and they relate sometimes to the subject, and sometimes to the attribute^f.

When in a text there are several terms, which need a particular explanation, and which cannot be explained without confusion, or without dividing the text into too many parts, then I would not divide the *text* at all: but I would divide *the discourse* into two or three parts; and I would propose, first to explain the terms, and then the subject itself. This would be necessary on Acts ii. 27, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." To discuss this text properly, I think, the discourse should be divided into three parts, the first consisting of some *general considerations*, to prove that the text relates to Jesus Christ, and that Peter alleged it properly: the second, of some *particular considerations* on the terms; *soul*, which signifies *life*; *grave*, which also signifies *hell*; on which the Church of Rome grounds her opinion of Christ's descent into, what her divines call, *limbus patrum*; *holy*, which in this place signifies *immortal, unalterable, indestructible; corruption,*

^f *Syncategorematica*. Of this kind are those words, which of themselves signify nothing, but in conjunction with others in a proposition are very significant.

which means not the *moral* corruption of sin, but the *natural* corruption of the body. Finally, we must examine the *subject* itself, the *resurrection* of Jesus Christ^g.

There are many texts, in discussing which, it is not necessary to treat of either subject or attribute: but all the discussion depends on the terms *syncategorematica*. For example, John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." The categorical proposition is, God loved the world; yet it is neither necessary to insist much on the term God, nor to speak in a common-place way of the love of God: but divide the text into *two* parts; first, the gift which God in his love hath made of his Son; secondly, the end for which he gave him, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In the first, you must shew how Jesus Christ is the *gift* of God: 1. In that he did not come by principles of nature. 2. Inasmuch as there was nothing among men to merit it. 3. In that there was nothing among men to excite even the least regard of any kind. 4. There was not the least proportion between us and so great a gift. But, 5. There was, on the contrary, an infinite disproportion; and not only a disproportion, but an opposition and a contrariety. Then pass to the *cause* of this gift, which is love; and after having observed that it was a love of complacency, for which, on the creature's part, no reason can be rendered, particularly press the term *so*, and display the greatness of this love by many considerations. Then go to the second point, and examine, 1. The fruit of Christ's mission, the salvation of man, expressed negatively, that *he should not perish*, and positively, that *he should have eternal life*. Speak of these one after another. After this observe, 2. For whom the benefit of Christ's mission is ordained, *believers*. And, lastly, enlarge on the word *whosoever*, which signifies two things; 1. That no believer is excluded from the benefits of Jesus Christ; and, 2. That no man, *as such*, is excluded from faith, for all are indifferently called.

[This being, if not a very important, yet somewhat of a curious, rule, the editor thinks it not inexpedient to add one or two more illustrations of it. John xv. 15, "Henceforth I call you not servants, &c. but friends," &c. The force of this

^g See on Ps. cx. 1—7.

passage depends on the word "*Henceforth*." To mark it, shew,
 I. The privileges of the Jewish Church; (as his servants, they were admitted into his house, instructed in their duty, protected in the discharge of it, and rewarded for their services.—And these were great inestimable privileges when compared with the blindness, rebellion, and misery of the heathen world.—)
 II. The superior privileges of the Christian Church. Great as were the privileges of the Jewish Church, they were nothing in comparison of ours. Consider, 1. *Our superior light*—(What the Jews were taught was dark, shadowy, typical: the prophets themselves understood not their own prophecies—, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. But the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth: and the whole mystery of godliness is fully revealed.—)
 2. *Our superior liberty*—(the Jews were kept at a distance from God: Heb. xii. 18—22. But we have the nearest access to him: ib. 22—24. The high-priest alone could enter into the most holy place: but now every one of us may: compare Heb. ix. 7, 8. with x. 19—22. On this may be founded an exhortation to all; 1. To seek to be brought into this relation to Christ; 2. To improve it for their own highest interests; and 3. To walk worthy of it.)

Another passage to be treated in this may be Exod. xxxiv. 5. "The Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord." By comparing this with Exod. xxxiii. 21, 22, it will be seen that very peculiar stress is to be laid on the word "*There*:" and the proper mode of treating it would be this: 1. The situation in which Moses was placed; (Here it would be proper to shew, that the place was the rock in Horeb; which rock typified the Lord Jesus Christ; in whom alone a fallen creature can ever behold the face of God and live:) 2. The revelation which God gave of himself to him, (as a God of infinite majesty, unbounded mercy, and inflexible justice.) See Discourse on Exod. xxxiv. 5—7.

In another passage, Deut. xxvii. 26, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen;" the whole force of the passage lies in the word, "*Amen*." See Discourse on the passage.]

In texts of *reasoning*, the propositions which compose the syllogism must be examined one after another, and each apart.

Sometimes it will be even necessary to consider the *force* of the reasoning, and to make one part of that also.

[In discoursing on Judg. xiii. 22, 23, "Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these:" it would be proper to consider, I. Her argument.—In doing which you would notice particularly, 1. The facts on which she argued (which you would state from the history, interspersing them with pertinent remarks.) 2. The argument she founded on them (which, whilst it shewed the penetration of her own mind, and the strength of her faith, was well calculated to allay Manoah's fears.) II. The force and conclusiveness of it.—It was founded, 1. On the goodness of God, (who had given such manifestations of himself, and such promises to her: which could never be a prelude to the exercise of his wrath.) 2. On the truth of God, (who had promised them a child, and given them directions in reference to his education, &c. who therefore would defeat his own purposes, if he were to destroy them *at this time*.) 3. On the immutability of God, (who having given them such tokens of his love, would love them to the end.) In improving which subject you might point out, 1. The *grounds* of faith—the promises and perfections of God—2. The *nature* of faith—a simple reliance on God, and an expectation of his promised blessings—3. The *excellence* of faith—tranquillizing the mind.

I would add, that in some cases the *force* of the reasoning may even constitute the *chief* part. See Discourse on Acts ii. 36.]

Sometimes we shall find a *proposition concealed*, which it will be proper to supply. You must in such a case consider, whether the hidden proposition be important enough to make a part, which it will sometimes be, as in Rom. iv. 1, "What shall we then say, that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? for if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God." Divide this text into two parts. 1. Consider the question, "What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?" And, 2. The solution.

[I would rather say, (for Mr. Claude's whole illustration of this is but dark, and has been rendered still more so by the translator,) Consider, 1. His unquestionable statement:

2. His obvious, though hidden, conclusion. Under the first head I would mark the force of his *appeal*; thus: you acknowledge that you must be justified in the same way that your father Abraham was. But how was he justified? By works? If so, he had whereof to glory. But, whatever he might have to glory of before men, he had nothing *before God*: as the Scripture testifies, when it declares that "his faith was counted to him for righteousness."

Then, under the second head, the hidden conclusion might be fully and firmly stated, that neither could they, nor any child of man, be justified by works.

Another example will elucidate this more fully. Take Acts vii. 48—50. "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?" Here is a hidden conclusion, which it would be proper to bring forth. Stephen, with exquisite tenderness and caution, had for a long time kept out of view the ultimate scope of his discourse. But now it began indistinctly to appear: and the very anticipation of it filled all his audience with rage and madness against him. Hence, in discoursing on these words, it would be proper to open, 1. The passage cited; and, 2. The unquestionable inference to be drawn from it. For, if whilst the Mosaic economy was yet in all its glory, God poured contempt upon the temple, which was his own more immediate residence, and the place in which above all he was glorified, it was clear, that his glory did not depend on *that*, or on the economy connected with it; but that it might equally be advanced among the Gentiles who could have no access to that temple, and be equally maintained by the simpler institutions of Christianity, when the whole Mosaic economy should be swept away. This was the hidden proposition which Stephen intended to establish: and in order to treat the above passage with effect, it would be necessary to bring it to light, and to give it a considerable prominence in the discussion.]

There are *texts* of reasoning which are composed of an *objection* and the *answer*, and the division of such is plain; for they naturally divide into the objection and the solution. As Rom. vi. 1, 2, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we,

that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Divide this into two parts, the objection and the answer. The objection is, first, proposed in general terms, "What shall we say then?" 2. In more particular terms, "Shall we continue in sin?" And, 3. The reason and ground of the objection, "because grace abounds." The solution of the question is the same. In general, "God forbid." In particular, "How shall we live in sin?" And the reason, "We are dead to sin."

[This arrangement of Mr. Claude's is *too technical*; and would be incapable of being formed into a profitable discourse. The following may perhaps answer the end somewhat better.

I. The objection.

1. The ground of it—(It arises from the Apostle's magnifying the super-abounding grace of God.)
2. The validity of it—(Were it well founded, it would utterly subvert the Apostle's statement.)

II. The answer.

The character of the true Christian is, that "he is dead to sin." (He is dead to sin *by profession*—inasmuch as he professes both obedience to Christ; who died to redeem us from it: and conformity to Christ; who in all that he did or suffered is a pattern to us, ver. 4—11. He is dead to sin also *by experience*—as appears, by the promises made to him, ver. 14; by the lives of the first Christians; and by the objections urged against him as righteous over-much. From this very character it appears that he cannot live in sin (allowed sin would shock all his feelings; give the lie to all his professions; and prove, that he had no part in Christ. *The appeal* is stronger than the strongest affirmation.)

OBSERVE,

1. What is the only true mode of stating the Gospel.

(If we clog it in such a manner as to preclude a possibility of such a cavil as this, we do not state it as St. Paul did. We must not indeed be unguarded; yet must we declare the Gospel in all its freeness and in all its fulness.)

2. How diligently we should all consider our obligations and professions.

(By not attending to these, we are tempted to act unworthily. But we should treat temptations to sin, as a prince would an overture or proposal to do any thing that would disgrace even a common beggar.)]

There are some *texts* of reasoning which are extremely *difficult* to divide, because they cannot be reduced to many propositions without confusion, or savouring too much of the schools, or having a defect in the division; in short, without being unsatisfactory. In such a case, let ingenuity and good sense contrive *some extraordinary way*, which, if proper and agreeable, cannot fail of producing a good effect. For example, John iv. 10, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water;" I think it might not be improper to divide it into *two* parts; the first including the *general propositions* contained in the words; and the second, the *particular application* of these to the Samaritan woman. In the first, observe these following propositions: That Jesus Christ is the *gift* of God—That though he asked for drink, he is the *fountain of living water* himself—That he is the *object* of our knowledge, both as the *gift* of God, and as the *fount* of living water—That an *application* to him for this living water, flows from our knowledge of him—That he gives the water of life to *all who ask it*. In the second part you may observe, that Jesus Christ did not disdain to converse with a *woman*, a Samaritan woman, a *schismatic*, out of the communion of the visible Church, a very *wicked* woman, a woman who in her schism and sin *disputed* against the truth—That Jesus Christ *improved this opportunity* to teach her his grace, without amusing himself with directly answering what she said.—You may remark the *ignorance* of this woman in regard to the Lord Jesus: she saw him; she heard him; but she did not know him: from which you may observe, that this is the general condition of sinners, who have God always before their eyes, yet never perceive him—That from the woman's ignorance arose her *negligence* and loss of such a fair opportunity of being instructed. Observe also the *mercy* of Jesus Christ towards her; for he even promised to save her. When he said, "If thou wouldest have asked of him, he would have given thee living water;" it was as much as if he had offered to instruct her.—Remark too, that Jesus Christ went even so far as to *command* her to ask him for living water; for when he said, "If thou wouldest have asked him," he did as much as say, Ask him now.—Observe, finally, that he *excited* her to seek and to know him, and removed her ignorance, the cause of all her mistakes and miseries.

[Another text will elucidate this matter more fully. Take Luke vii. 41—43, “There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.” Now in treating this text agreeably to the suggestion of Mr. Claude, one might either take broad ground, (as I would call it,) or narrow ground, according as might appear most suitable to the persons to be addressed.

If broad ground were preferred, (and it would be preferable for common congregations,) one might consider, I. The occasion; II. The scope; and III. The application of the parable.

I. The occasion.—It arose from the Pharisee condemning the woman for this exercise of her piety—And similar occasion arises daily; since there is no exercise of piety which men will not condemn.

II. The scope—Which was to vindicate the woman (and all who are like her shall be vindicated by God at the last day).

III. The application—Which was to shew the Pharisee, that his readiness to condemn the woman arose from an ignorance of his own deserts; and that he himself ought to seek after the very graces which she had exercised.

If, on the contrary, narrow ground were preferred, and only one or two points in the parable were seized, (which would be better for a learned congregation,) it might be treated thus: Observe,

I. Men will condemn every exercise of religion.

None could have been more blameless than hers; yet it provoked hostility; even as Christ himself did, and we also must expect to do.

II. They themselves may be condemned on their own principles.

Ought our Maker to be served? our Redeemer to be loved? our obligations to be acknowledged? Then such religion as hers is right.]

There are sometimes *texts which imply* many important *truths* without expressing them; and yet it will be necessary to mention and enlarge upon them, either because they are

useful on some important occasion, or because they are important of themselves. Then the text must be divided into two parts, one implied, and the other expressed. I own this way of division is bold, and must neither be abused, nor too often used; but there are occasions, it is certain, on which it may be very justly and agreeably taken. A certain preacher, on a fast-day, having taken for his subject these words of Isaiah, "Seek the Lord while he may be found," divided his text into two parts, one implied, the other expressed. In the *first* he said, that there were *three* important truths, of which he was obliged to speak: 1. That *God* was *far from us*. 2. That *we* were *far from him*. And, 3. That there was a *time*, in which God would not be found, although we sought him. He spoke of these one after another. In the first, he enumerated the *afflictions* of the Church, in a most affecting manner; observing, that all these sad events did but too plainly prove the absence of the favour of God. 2. He enumerated the *sins* of the Church, and shewed how distant we were from God. And, in the third place, he represented that sad time, when God's patience was, as it were, wearied out; and added, that then he displayed his heaviest judgments without speaking any more the language of mercy. At length coming to the part *expressed*, he explained what it was to *seek* the Lord; and by a pathetic *exhortation*, stirred up his hearers to make that search. Finally, he explained what was the *time* in which God would be found, and renewed his exhortations to *repentance*, mixing therewith hopes of pardon, and of the blessing of God. His sermon was very much admired, particularly for its order.

[It may not be amiss to suggest another illustration of this also. Take 1 Cor. i. 30, "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Here we may notice,

I. What is implied—

1. That we are destitute of all good (being ignorant, guilty, polluted, and enslaved:)
2. That we are incapable of acquiring it by any powers of our own—

II. What is expressed—

1. We must receive all from God in Christ Jesus—

We must be in Christ as a branch in the vine. But it is God only that can engraft us into him, and make

him a perfect Saviour to us. This is twice expressly declared.

2. In Christ Jesus we may have all the blessings that we stand in need of. He will be to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption^h.]

In *texts of history*, divisions are easy: [Take for instance Acts ii. 37—39, “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Here observe,

I. The inquiry—Mark,

1. The importance of it—which is infinite and universal.
2. The manner in which it should be made—viz. with compunction—with earnestness—with a readiness to receive instruction.

II. The answer—This consists of,

1. Direction—repent—believe—confess Christ openly.
2. Encouragement—This promise is necessary for all—and made to all. Isai. xlv. 3, and lix. 21; John vii. 37—39; Gal. iii. 14ⁱ.]

Sometimes an action is related in all its *circumstances*, and then you may consider the *action* in itself first, and afterwards the *circumstances* of the action.

Sometimes it is necessary to remark the *occasion* of an action, and to make one part of it^k.

Sometimes there are *actions* and *words* which must be considered *separately*.

Sometimes it is *not necessary to make any division at all*: but the order of the history must be followed. In short, it depends on the state of each text in particular.

To render a division agreeable, and easy to be remembered by the hearer, endeavour to reduce it as often as possible to simple terms. By a simple term I mean a *single word*, in the same sense as in logic what they call *terminus simplex* is

^h See also on Mal. i. 11. or on Acts iv. 12.

ⁱ See on 1 Kings xxi. 20. or on Jer. xxxvi. 27, 28.

^k See on 1 Chron. xxii. 19.

distinguished from what they call *terminus complex*. Indeed, when the parts of a discourse are expressed in abundance of words, they are not only embarrassing, but also useless to the hearers, for they cannot retain them. Reduce them then as often as you can to a single term.

[To illustrate the way of simplifying a subject, which, if ill divided, would be very complex, and of making the connexion of the parts clear, take the following. 1 Cor. i. 4—9, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." In these words see,

- I. The blessings which the Gospel *imparts*—an enlightened mind; and a waiting spirit.
- II. The blessings which it *secures*—our continued preservation—and our ultimate acceptance.]

Observe also, as often as possible, to *connect* the parts of your division together; either by way of opposition, or of cause and effect, or of action and end, or action and motive, or in some way or other; for to make a division of many parts, which have no connexion, is exceedingly offensive to the hearers, who will be apt to think that all you say, after such a division, is nonsense: besides, the human mind naturally loving order, it will much more easily retain a division in which there appears a connexion¹.

[Division may sometimes be *altogether arbitrary*, provided you attend to the words and matter of the text in the discussion. For instance, on Matt. x. 32—39, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the

¹ This direction of Mr. Claude's, like most of his other rules, is founded on the knowledge of human nature, which delights in orderly connexions, and is extremely disgusted with every thing incongruous.

daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." It would be proper to treat this passage *without any division at all, or in an arbitrary way*, thus:—

We have here the rule of Christ's procedure in the day of judgment I. Stated; (He will confess or deny us *then*, according as we confess or deny him *now* :) II. Vindicated, (from the objections, that such a rule is *unnecessary*, and *unjust*; *unnecessary*, since Christianity can produce nothing but peace; (which is not true :) and *unjust*, because such negative sinfulness can never deserve such heavy punishment; whereas a person whose love will not enable him to lay down his life for Christ, is not worthy of him :) III. Confirmed; (for He only who will lose his life for Christ, shall find it unto life eternal.)

This subject will further illustrate what was said before, and what the reader should perfectly understand, viz. the marking of *the character of the text*. Many good and profitable things might be said on this passage, though it should be treated in a loose and immethodical way: but by marking the text as an *announcement of the rule of Christ's procedure in the last day*, the arrangement is made easy, and perfect unity is introduced into the whole discourse. That I call *the character of the text*.

But take another example of *arbitrary division*; John vi. 44, "No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." Instead of shewing, I. What is meant by the drawings of the Father; and, II. Why we cannot come to Christ without them; it would be far better to strike out *an arbitrary division*, and to treat the subject, thus:

I. It is *difficult*; and therefore I will *explain* it.

II. It is *deemed objectionable*; and therefore I will *assign the reasons* of it.

III. It is *liable to abuse*; and therefore I will *guard* it^m.

^m See on Job v. 19—27. or on Ezek. xviii. 25—30. or on Amos ix. 13. or on Acts viii. 37.

A subject so presented to the minds of an audience would arrest their attention more than if it were set before them in a hackneyed way, and would open a better field for discussion.]

As to *subdivisions*, it is always necessary to make them; for they very much assist composition, and diffuse perspicuity through a discourse: but it is not always needful to mention them; on the contrary, they must be very seldom mentioned; because it would load the hearer's mind with a multitude of particulars. Nevertheless, when subdivisions can be made agreeably, either on account of the excellence of the matter, or when it will raise the hearers' attention, or when the justness of parts harmonize agreeably one with another, you may formally mention them: but this must be done very seldom; for the hearers would be presently tired of such a method, and by that means cloyed of the whole.

CHAPTER V.

OF TEXTS TO BE DISCUSSED BY WAY OF EXPLICATION.

I PROCEED now from general to more particular rules, and will endeavour to give some precepts for invention and disposition.

I suppose then, in the first place, that no man will be so rash as to put pen to paper, or begin to discuss a text, till he has well comprehended the sense of it. I have given no rule about this before; for a man who wants to be told, that he ought not to preach on a text before he understands it, ought at the same time to be informed, that he is fitter for any other profession than that of a minister.

I suppose, secondly, that the student, having well understood the sense of his text, begins by dividing it; and that, having the several parts before his eyes, he very nearly sees what are the subjects which he will have to discuss, and, consequently, what ought to enter into his composition.

I suppose, farther, that he is a man not altogether a novice in divinity; but that he is acquainted with common places, and the principal questions of which they treat.

Supposing all these, the first thing that I would have such a man do, is to observe the *nature of his text*; for there are doctrinal, historical, prophetic, and typical texts. Some contain a command, others a prohibition; some a promise,

others a threatening; some a wish, others an exhortation; some a censure, others a motive to action; some a parable, some a reason; some a comparison of two things together, some a vision, some a thanksgiving; some a description of the wrath, or majesty of God, of the sun, or some other thing; a commendation of the law, or of some person; a prayer; an amplification of joy, or affliction; a pathetic exclamation of anger, sorrow, admiration, imprecation, repentance, confession of faith, patriarchal or pastoral benediction, consolation, &c. I take the greatest part to be mixed, containing different kinds of things. It is very important for a man, who would compose, to examine his text well upon these articles, and carefully to distinguish all its characters, for in so doing he will presently see what way he ought to take.

Having well examined of what kind the text is, enter into the matter, and begin the composition; for which purpose you must observe, there are two general ways, or two manners of composing. One is the way of *explication*, the other of *observations*: nor must it be imagined that you may take which of the two ways you please on every text, for some texts must be treated in the explicatory method, and others necessarily require the way of observations. When you have a point of *doctrine* to treat of, you must have recourse to explication; and when a text of *history*, the only way is observation.

In discernment upon this article the judgment of a man consists; for, as texts of Scripture are almost infinite, it is impossible to give perfect rules thereupon; it depends in general on good sense: only this I say, when we treat of a plain subject, common and known to all the world, it is a great absurdity to take the way of *explication*; and when we have to treat of a difficult or important subject, which requires explaining, it would be equally ridiculous to take the way of *observations*.

The difficulty of which we speak may be considered, either in regard to the *terms* of the text only, the subject itself being clear, after the words are explained; or in regard to the *subject* only, the terms themselves being very intelligible; or in regard to *both terms and things*.

If the *terms* be obscure, we must endeavour to give the true sense: but if they be clear, it would be trifling to affect to make them so; and we must pass on to the difficulty, which

is in the subject itself. If the subject be clear, we must explain the terms, and give the true sense of the words. If there appear any absurdity or difficulty in *both*, both must be explained: but always begin with the explanation of the terms.

In the explication of the *terms*, first propose what they call *ratio dubitandi*, that is, whatever makes the difficulty. The reason of doubting, or the intricacy, arises often from several causes. Either the terms do not seem to make any sense at all; or they are equivocal, forming different senses; or the sense, which they seem at first to make, may be perplexed, improper, or contradictory; or the meaning, though clear in itself, may be controverted, and exposed to cavillers. In all these cases, after you have proposed the difficulty determine it as briefly as you can; for which purpose avail yourself of criticisms, notes, comments, paraphrases, &c. and, in one word, of the labours of other persons.

If none of these answer your expectation, endeavour to find something better yourself; to which purpose, examine all the circumstances of the text, what precedes, what follows, the general scope of the discourse, the particular design of the writer in the place where your text is, the subject of which it treats, parallel passages of Scripture, which treat of the same subject, or those in which the same expressions are used, &c.; and by these means it is almost impossible that you should not content yourself. Above all, take care not to make of grammatical matters a principal part; but only treat of them as previously necessary for understanding the text.

To proceed from terms to *things*. They must, as I have said, be explained, when they are either difficult or important. There are several ways of explication. You may begin by *refuting* errors, into which people have fallen; or you may fall upon the subject immediately, and so come to a fair and precise *declaration of the truth*; and, after this, you may *dilate* (if I may venture to say so) by a deduction of the principles, on which the text depends, and on the essential relations, in which it ought to be considered^a.

The same method must be taken, when texts are misunderstood, and gross and pernicious errors adduced. In such a

^a The Reader, if he wish to see an illustration of the point before him, may refer to the first head of the Discourse on 2 Tim. ii. 19.

case, first reject the erroneous sense, and (if necessary) even refute it, as well by reasons taken from the texts, as by arguments from other topics; and at length establish the true sense.

Take, for example, John xvi. 12, "I have yet many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now." You must begin by proposing and rejecting the false senses which some ancient heretics gave of these words. They said, Jesus Christ spoke here of many *unwritten traditions*, which he gave his Disciples by word of mouth after his resurrection; an argument which the Church of Rome has borrowed, to colour her pretended traditions. After you have thus proposed the false sense, and solidly refuted it, pass on to establish the true, and shew what were the *things* which Jesus Christ had *yet to say* to his Disciples, and which they *could not then bear*.

I would advise the same method for *all disputed texts*. Hold it as a maxim, to begin to open the way to a truth by rejecting a falsehood. Not that it can be always done; sometimes you must begin by explaining the truth, and afterwards reject the error; because there are certain occasions, on which the hearers' minds must be pre-occupied; and because also truth, well proposed and fully established, naturally destroys error: but, notwithstanding this, the most approved method is to begin by rejecting error. After all, it must be left to a man's judgment when he ought to take different courses.

There are texts of explication, in which the difficulty arises neither from equivocal terms, nor from the different senses in which they may be taken, nor from objections which may be formed against them, nor from the abuse which heretics have made of them; but from the *intricacy of the subject itself*, which may be difficult to comprehend, and may require great study and meditation. On such texts you need not, you must not, amuse yourself in proposing difficulties, nor in making objections; but you must enter immediately into the explication of the matter, and take particular care to arrange your ideas well, that is to say, in a natural and easy order, beginning where you ought to begin; for if you do not begin right, you can do nothing to the purpose; and, on the contrary, if you take a right road, all will appear easy as you go on to the end^b.

^b See on Ps. li. 6. or on Jer. xvii. 9. or on Eph. i. 3—12. or on Eph. iii. 14—19.

[The Editor, though not *wholly* approving of Mr. Claude's elucidation of John i. 17, does not think it expedient to omit it; because he wishes the reader to see the difference between a subject treated with too great a variety of subdivisions, and one in which a more simple and contracted view of the text is taken. Previously therefore to the considering of Mr. Claude's elucidation of this topic, the Editor would submit to the reader two brief expositions of intricate subjects.

In treating Col. i. 9—13, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son;" he would open the passage thus: Here we see, 1. What the Christian should desire (A knowledge of God's will—A life conformed to it—An ability to bear cheerfully whatever he may meet with in his Christian course:) 2. What he has to be thankful for (His change of state—His change of nature—) For IMPROVEMENT, observe what an exalted character the Christian is—how benevolent—how happy.

Again—In treating Col. ii. 10—12, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead." Complex as the passage is, it may be made extremely simple. The great point is to *mark distinctly the great scope of the passage*. The Apostle is guarding the Colossians against philosophy and vain deceit: and, *to shew them how little philosophy can add to them*, he asserts, I. Our completeness in Christ, (In him we have every thing—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. What can philosophy add even to the weakest believer, in any one of these respects?) II. Our conformity to Christ (The whole *work* of Christ, as well as his

life, is a pattern for us, and his faithful followers are conformed to it—that is, to his circumcision, his baptism, &c.—What was done to him externally, is done internally in us.) The whole of this is capable of easy and profitable enlargement.]

If, for example, I were to preach from this text, “The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;” I would divide this text into two parts. The first should regard the ministry of the law: the second, that of the Gospel: the one expressed in these words, “The law was given by Moses;” the other in these, “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

[This *literal* method of explication is very justly accounted the *best* way of interpreting Scripture. The Editor however takes the liberty of observing, that it might have been better if Mr. C. had made fewer subdivisions, and had been more particular in his choice of them. It seems best to adopt those which give a *just* view of the subject, and to reject every thing which appears forced or fanciful. The Editor is extremely anxious that all who read this book with a view to instruction in the composition of a sermon, should attend to this hint.

The specimen however that is here exhibited, though not altogether free from exception, is by no means unworthy of attention. And, as it may help to give the reader some insight into the nature and use of the author’s own discourses, it is here drawn out in the form of a skeleton.—The reader is requested to cast his eye over it first, *omitting what is contained in the brackets*.

I. The ministry of the law.

The law may be considered as a ministry of *Rigour*, as opposed to *Grace*.

[Man knew neither himself nor his God—

It was necessary therefore to discover to him his misery, and his duty—

This was the end which God proposed in the ministry of the law—

The ministration of the law was well calculated to answer this end—]

It may be considered also as a ministry of *Shadows*, as opposed to *Truth*.

[It held out *Promises* of what was afterwards to be accomplished—

It exhibited in *Types* the mercies which God had in reserve for them—

It imparted *the Beginnings* of that salvation, which was to be afterwards more largely bestowed—

Yet it could only be called "*Law*," because, however the grace of the Gospel was blended with that economy, the *legal* part was predominant—]

The author, or dispenser of this law, was **Moses**.

[God indeed was the first and principal author of this law—

Moses was only the mediator by whom God dispensed it—

Nor as a mediator was he a real, but only a typical mediator—]

As the dispenser of it he was greatly honoured by God.

[He was the *Interpreter* of the Israelites to God, and of God to them—

He was employed to *shew forth the Mighty Power of Jehovah*—

He was inspired to *transmit in writing* the history of his own nation—]

II. The ministry of the Gospel.

"Grace and truth" are here put for the Gospel of Jesus Christ—

The Gospel is called *Grace* in opposition to the *Rigours of the Law*.

[God manifested himself in it, not as on Mount Sinai with thunderings, but in a *gentle manner*, under a veil of human flesh—

In it he reveals his *mercy* and parental love—

It is his *free Gift*, according to his *own good Pleasure*—

It is accompanied with a *Divine Efficacy* to the souls of men—

It operates on us, not enthusiastically, but in a *rational manner*—]

It is called *Truth* in opposition to *Falsehood*.

[It is the *accomplishment* of what existed only in *Promises* before—

It is the *Substance* of what was before exhibited in *Types*—

It is the *Completion* of what, under the law, was only *begun*—]

The author of this Gospel was Jesus Christ.

[He, like Moses, was an *Interpreter* between God and men—

His ministry also, like Moses's, was accompanied with *miracles*—

He moreover caused his Gospel to be *written* for a perpetual rule—]

As such He was honoured infinitely above Moses.

[Moses was only the *Dispenser* of the law, but Christ was the *Author* of grace and truth—

Moses did not *procure* the covenant of which he was mediator; whereas the covenant of grace was given, *not only through Christ, but on his account*—

Moses could only *report* God's will to men; but Jesus Christ both reported it to them, and became a *Guarantee* for their performance of it—

Moses was not the *Source*, nor even the *Dispenser* of the Spirit, that accompanied the legal economy; but Christ communicates the Spirit out of *his own Fulness*^c—

Moses wrought miracles by a *foreign* power; but Jesus Christ by *his own*—

Moses was established over *God's house* as a *Servant*; but Jesus Christ as a *Son*, (i. e. a master and heir) over *his own house*—]

There are some texts which must be discussed by way of explication, although neither terms nor things are difficult; but because the matter is important, and a meditation of it beautiful and full of edification. Passages of this kind must needs be proposed in all their extent^d.

Take, for example, these words of St. Paul, 2 Cor. iv. 7. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." This passage is of this sort; the terms are easy, and the subject, of which St. Paul speaks, has no difficulty: but yet, on account of the importance of the matter, it must needs be explained, or, to speak more properly, extensively proposed.

I would then divide this text into two parts; the first should be the Apostle's *proposition*; and the second, the *reason* which he gives for it. His proposition is contained in these words, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." The reason, which he assigns, is contained in the following words,

^c John i. 16.

^d See on Ps. xlviii. 12—14.

“That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

[The Editor left this discourse in many of the former editions, in order to illustrate his reason for altering or omitting some that follow; but he has expunged it as unworthy of the author. Mr. Claude's *rules* are so good as scarcely to admit of any improvement; and he is, for the most part, happy in his illustration of them. But in some of the longer discourses he multiplies subdivisions, so as to obscure, and almost destroy, the unity of the subject. This was the case, in the discourse here omitted. Under the *first subdivision* of the first general head, he had no less than eight subdivisions more (the four last of which, at best, were superfluous, and tended to perplex, rather than elucidate, the subject;) and under the *second subdivision* of the same head, he had subdivision after subdivision. The same fault obtained under the second general head also: and in some other of his discourses, he seems (in opposition to his own rule, p. 298, § 3.) studious to say all that can be said, instead of selecting what is most pertinent and proper. The Editor conceives the present discourse would have been more perspicuous and instructive, if the more select parts of the latter subdivisions had been compressed into one *continued* illustration of the former subdivision: Thus—

I. The proposition; “We have this treasure in earthen vessels”

The Gospel is here justly represented under the image of a *treasure*—

[There is no other treasure so *valuable*, so *abundant*, so *substantial*—

Nor can it be possessed without joy, without jealousy, without caution—]

And it was in the Apostles as “in earthen vessels”

[They were not authors of the Gospel, but mere *instruments* to receive and dispense it—

Though honoured thus, they were still *mean*, and *full of infirmities*—]

II. The reason which he gives for it; “That the excellency,” &c.

There is an *excellency of power* in the Gospel—

[There is a *divine virtue* in the doctrine of the Gospel to humble and comfort men—

And, when *confirmed by miracles*, and *applied by the Holy Ghost*, it had wonderful *success in their conversion*—]

God's design in committing such a treasure to earthen vessels, was, that this power *might appear to be of him, and not of men*.

[Men are ever inclined to ascribe to second causes, effects, which belong only to the first cause: *e. g.* The heathens, the Lycaonians, the Jews, and even St. John himself—

And it was to preclude such an abuse of his Gospel, that he employed such weak instruments to propagate it throughout the world—]

If the reader will only bear in mind, that Mr. Claude's *discourses are introduced solely with a view to illustrate the rules*, he will require no further apology for the alteration or omission of such as obstruct, rather than advance, the general design of this Essay.

Another text to elucidate this mode of explication may be, 1 Cor. iii. 11, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Shew,

I. What foundations men lay for themselves—

[1. Their own works; 2. Their own works and Christ's merits united.]

II. What is the foundation that God has laid—

[Not any of the foregoing; but the Lord Jesus Christ.]

III. Why no other can be laid—

[1. No other would be worthy of the divine Architect;
2. No other would support the weight that is laid upon it.]

Observe, farther, there are *two* sorts of explications. The first is simple and plain, and needs only to be *proposed*, and enlivened with clear and agreeable elucidations.

The other kind of explications must not only be stated, and explained, but they must also be *confirmed* by sufficient evidence. Sometimes a text speaks of a *fact*, which can be confirmed only by proofs of fact: sometimes it is a matter of *right*, that must be established by proofs of right: and sometimes it is a subject made up of *both* fact and right; and consequently proofs of right, as well as proofs of fact, must be adduced*. We will give an example of each.

* See on 1 Kings xii. 24. or on 2 Kings i. 11, 12. or on Ps. ci. 2.

For the first, take this text, Phil. ii. 6, "Jesus Christ, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Having explained what it is to be in the "form of God," and to "count it not robbery to be equal with God," namely, that it is to be God, essentially equal with the Father, and co-eternal with him, &c. you must needs make use of proofs of *fact* on this occasion; for every one sees it is a fact, which it is necessary to *prove*, not merely by the force of St. Paul's terms, but also by many other Scripture-proofs, which establish the divinity of Jesus Christ.

But were you to preach from the 14th and 15th verses of the same chapter, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life;" it is evident, that, after you have explained the vices which St. Paul forbids, and the virtues which he recommends, the exhortation must be confirmed by reasons of *right*, which shew how unworthy and contrary to our calling these vices are; how much beauty and propriety in the virtues enjoined; and how strong our obligations are to abstain from the one, and to practise the other.

Our third example includes proofs of *both* kinds. Take the 7th verse of the same chapter, "Jesus Christ made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:" or the 8th verse, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to the death of the cross:" or the 9th verse, which speaks of Christ's exaltation. Having explained the subject, you must endeavour to confirm it, not only by proofs of fact, but also by proofs of right; to which purpose you must prove, 1. That the fact *is* as St. Paul says. And, 2. That it *ought to be* as it is, by reasons taken from the wisdom of God, &c.

[This may be more clearly illustrated by 1 Cor. xvi. 22, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha." To treat this, shew, I. The import. II. The certainty. III. The reasonableness—of this denunciation.]

In like manner, in discussing this text, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;" after you have proposed in a few words the

Apostle's doctrine, it ought to be confirmed, as well by proofs of fact, which make it plain that God has always been pleased to observe this method, as by proofs of right, which shew that he does thus with a great deal of wisdom. You will meet with an almost infinite number of texts of this nature.

There are sometimes texts of explication, in which we are obliged to explain some one great and important article consisting of many branches. As for example, predestination; and efficacious converting grace. In this case you may either reduce the matter to a certain number of *propositions*, and discuss them one after another; or you may reduce them to a certain number of *questions*, and discuss them in like manner: but you ought (choose which way you will) to take particular care not to lay down any proposition, or any question, which is not formally contained in your text, or which does not follow by a near and easy consequence; for otherwise you would discuss the matter in a common-place way.

For example. "It is God who worketh effectually in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." After you have explained what it is *to will*, and what *to do*, and have observed in a few words, that St. Paul's meaning is, that God is the author of both in us by the power of his grace, you may reduce the whole explication of the operation of his grace to five or six propositions. 1. God by his Holy Spirit illuminates the *understandings* of men; for working in us to *will* must necessarily be by illuminating the understanding. 2. That operation of grace, which illuminates the understanding, is practical, and not barely speculative; but descends even to the *heart*. St. Paul says, *God works in us to do*. 3. The *first dispositions* to conversion are effects of grace as well as conversion itself; for St. Paul not only says, God worketh in us *to do*, but he adds, he worketh in us *to will*; now this will consists in dispositions to conversion. 4. This operation of grace does not consist in putting us in a state capable of converting ourselves, as the admirers of sufficient grace say; but *it actually converts* us: for the Apostle says, "God worketh in us *to will* and *to do*." 5. The operation of this grace, which converts us, is of victorious *efficacy*, and obtains its end in spite of all the resistances of nature; for St. Paul says, "God effectually worketh in us *to will* and *to do*;" which means, that when he displays this grace, nothing can resist him. 6. When God converts us, whatever irresistibility there is in his grace,

he displays it nevertheless in us, in a way which neither destroys our nature, nor offers any violence to our will; for St. Paul says, "God worketh in us to will;" that is to say, he converts us by inspiring us with love for his Gospel, in gentle ways suited to the faculties of our souls^f.

Above all, take care to *arrange* your propositions well, when you take this method. Place the most general first, and follow the order of your knowledge, so that the first propositions may serve as steps to the second, the second to the third, and so of the rest^g.

Sometimes, what you have to explain in a text will consist of one or more *simple terms*; sometimes in certain ways of speaking *peculiar* to Scripture, or at least of such great importance, that they will deserve to be particularly weighed and explained; sometimes in *particles* which they call syncategorematica; and sometimes in propositions. For example, *simple terms* are, the divine attributes, goodness, mercy, wisdom, &c. The virtues of men, faith, hope, love, &c. Their vices and passions, ambition, avarice, vengeance, wrath, &c. In short, simple terms are single words, and they are either *proper*, or *figurative*. In order to explain *figurative* words, you must give the *meaning* of the figure in a few words; and without stopping long upon the figure, pass to the thing itself. And in general observe this rule, *never insist long on a simple term, unless it be absolutely necessary*; for to aim at exhausting (as it were), and saying all that can be said on a single word, is imprudent in a preacher, especially when there are many important matters in the text to be explained. Should any one (for example) in explaining these words of Isaiah,

'The Editor takes the liberty of observing, that *this* mode of illustrating a subject appears to him too refined and complex. He would rather recommend a more simple method. The thing to be explained is, the operation of divine grace; and it is to be explained in an immediate reference to the text. It might be said then, that its operation is *sovereign, rational, efficacious*. It is *sovereign*, the result of "God's good pleasure," since man has not so much as a disposition to good, till God has given it him; and therefore can have nothing in himself that can induce God to give it him. It is *rational*; for God influences us to action, not as mere machines, but by illuminating our understanding, and inclining our "will." It is *efficacious*; for, if he work in us "to will," he will surely work in us "to do;" nor, however separate, in idea, volition and action may be, shall they ever be separated in his people's experience.

This would include the principal observations of Mr. Claude, and render them both more intelligible, and *more easy to be remembered*

^g *Arrange your propositions well*. Nothing elucidates a subject more than a conformity to this rule. Cicero's three words are well known, *apte, distincte, ornate*.

“His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace;” should a preacher, I say, insist on each term, and endeavour to exhaust each word, he would handle the text in a common-place way, and quite tire the hearer. You ought then, in discussing such passages, to select the most obvious articles, and to enlarge principally on essential remarks.

Sometimes there are simple terms, of which you must only take notice cursorily, and *en passant*, as it were, just as they relate to the intention of the sacred author. For example, in St. Paul’s ordinary salutations, “Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,” it must not be imagined that each of the terms or phrases is to be considered *ex professo*, either *grace*, or *peace*, or *God the Father*, or *Jesus Christ*: but the whole text is to be considered as a *salutation*, a benediction, an introduction to the epistle, and in these views make necessary remarks on the terms. Observe the method of Mons. Daillé in his expositions of the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians. In one word, take care to explain simple terms as much as possible, in relation to the present *design* of the sacred author, and to the circumstances of the text; for by these means you will avoid common-places, and say proper and agreeable things.

Sometimes you will meet with texts, the simple terms of which must be discussed professedly; and in order to give a clear and full view of the subject, you must give a clear and distinct idea of the terms.

For example; 1 Tim. i. 5. “Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” Divide the text into three parts, the *first* of which may be the *commandment*, of which the Apostle speaks—the *second*, its *end*, *charity*—and the *third*, the *principles* from which this charity or love proceeds, from a *pure heart*, a *good conscience*, and *faith unfeigned*.

When there are many simple terms in a text, you must consider, whether it would not be more proper to treat of them *comparatively*, or *by marking their relation to each other*, than to discuss them separately, or each apart; for sometimes it would be very injudicious to discuss them separately, and very agreeable to do it by *comparison*^h.

^h The Editor thinks Mr. Claude’s discourse far *too complex*. The reader may consult the Discourse upon the same text, 1 Tim. i. 5.

[Not thinking Mr. Claude's illustration of this so simple as it might be, the Editor would suggest another. : Say, on 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17, to shew, *The excellency of the inspired volume.*

- I. Its real origin, given by inspiration of God.
- II. Its immediate uses. — *The establishment of truth*, by making known sound doctrines, and refuting false.—*The promotion of virtue*, by correcting evil ways, and directing to such as are good.
- III. Its ultimate end.—The making the man of God perfect, *in mind and judgment*, teaching him to view every thing as God views it; and *in heart and life*, stimulating him to a perfect conformity to the mind and will of God.

N.B. Under this last head the topic before us would be illustrated by shewing how admirably calculated the Scripture is by *its immediate uses* to produce *its ultimate end*.]

See also the Editor's Discourse on 1 Tim. i. 5. which should be treated, not under the head of the explication of simple terms, but *under this head*.

Take for example St. Luke's words, chap. ii. 8—11, " And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." In my opinion it would be very absurd to pretend to treat separately these simple terms, in order to explain what is a *shepherd*, and what is an *angel*, &c. But a *comparison* of these terms with each other would afford very beautiful and agreeable considerations, as will appear by the following analysis of the text. Let it then be divided into two parts: let the first be the *appearance* of the angels to the shepherds, with all the circumstances which the history remarks: and the second, the angels' *message* to them. The first is contained in the eighth and ninth verses, and the second in the tenth and eleventh.

Having spoken of simple terms, I proceed to add something concerning *expressions peculiar to Scripture*. These deserve a particular explication, and should be discussed and urged with great diligence, as well because they are peculiar

modes of speaking, as because they are rich with meaning. In this class I put such forms of speaking as these: "To be in Christ Jesus." "To come to Jesus Christ." "To come after Jesus Christ." "To live in the flesh." "To live after the flesh." "From faith to faith." "From glory to glory." "To walk after the flesh." "To walk after the Spirit." "The old man." "The new man." "Jesus Christ lives in you." "To live to Jesus Christ." "To live to ourselves." "To die to the world." "To die to ourselves." "To be crucified to the world." "The world to be crucified to us." "Jesus Christ made sin for us; we made the righteousness of God in him." "Christ put to death in the flesh, quickened by the Spirit." "Die unto sin." "Live unto righteousness." "Quench the Spirit." "Grieve the Spirit." "Resist the Holy Ghost." "Sin against the Holy Ghost:" and I know not how many more such expressions, which are found almost no where but in Scripture. Whenever you meet with such forms of speech as these, you must not pass them over lightly, but you must fully explain them, entering well into the spirit and meaning of them. It would be very convenient for a young man to procure for this purpose an exact collection, and endeavour to inform himself of the sense of each.

This subject would require, as it well deserves, a particular treatise; however, I will briefly give an example of the manner in which expressions of this kind should be discussed. Let us take these words; Mark viii. 34, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

Methinks it would not be improper to divide the sermon into two parts. In the first we would treat of the *expressions* which Jesus uses, "Come after me"—"deny himself"—"take up his cross"—"and follow me." And in the second we would examine the entire *sense* of our Saviour's *whole proposition*.

[The Editor cannot recommend this formal way of explaining *all* the terms first: he would rather cast the *subject* itself into some easy form, and explain the terms belonging to each part of the subject when that particular part comes to be discussed. Thus, Mark viii. 34.

I. The duties required of us in this injunction—to deny, &c. take, &c.

II. The universal and indispensable importance of it—None can be his without performing them.]

We have before observedⁱ, that, beside simple terms, and singular expressions peculiar to Scripture, there are also sometimes in texts, *particles*, that are called *syncategorematica*, which serve either for the augmentation or limitation of the meaning of the proposition: as the word *so* in John iii. 16, "God *so* loved the world:"—the word *now* in the eighth of Romans; "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus:"—and in many more passages of the same kind.

Whenever you meet with these terms, carefully examine them; for sometimes the greatest part, and very often the whole of the explication, depends upon them, as we have already remarked on that passage just now mentioned, "God *so* loved the world:" for the chief article in the doctrine of the love of God is its greatness, expressed by the word *so*. It is the same with that other term *now*, "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;" for the word *now* shews, that it is a conclusion drawn from the doctrine of justification, which the Apostle had taught in the preceding chapters; and it is as if he had said, 'From the principles which I have established, it follows, that "there is *now* no condemnation,"' &c. Having then explained, 1. What it is *to be in Christ Jesus*; 2. What it is *to be no more* subject to *condemnation*; chiefly insist, in the third place, on the word *now*; and shew that it is a doctrine which necessarily follows from what St. Paul had established touching justification, in the foregoing chapters: so that this term makes a real part of the explication, and indeed the most important part.

Sometimes these terms in question are not of consequence enough to be much dwelt on, but may be more properly passed with a slight remark. The word *Behold*, with which many propositions in Scripture begin, must be treated so; you must not make one part of this, nor insist on it too long. The same may be said of that familiar expression of Jesus Christ, *Verily, verily*, which is an asseveration, or, if you will, an oath: but neither on this must you insist much. So again, *Amen*, or *so be it*, which closes some texts; *Woe be to you*, which Jesus

ⁱ See before, page 314, where examples of it are given. It is exemplified in the Editor's Discourse on John xv. 15. where the discussion turns upon the word "henceforth." And again, in Discourse on Deut. xxvii. 26, where the word "Amen" serves as the foundation of the whole discourse.

Christ often repeats in the Gospel; with many more of the same kind. I know no certain rule to distinguish when they are important; but it must be left to the preacher's taste, and a little attention will make the necessary discernment very easy.

When the matter to be explained in a text consists of a *proposition*, you must, 1. *Give the sense clearly* and neatly, taking care to divest it of all sorts of ambiguity. [See the Discourse on John vi. 44.]

2. If it be requisite, shew how *important* in religion it is to be acquainted with the truth in hand; and for this purpose open its connexion with other important truths, and its dependence on them; the inconveniences that arise from negligence; the advantageous succours which piety derives thence; with other things of the same nature.

3. Having placed it in a clear light, and shewn its importance, if it require confirmation, *confirm* it. In all cases endeavour to *illustrate*, either by *reasons* or *examples*, or *comparisons* of the subjects with each other, or by remarking their *relation* to each other, or by shewing their *conformities* or *differences*, all with a view to illustrate the matter that you are discussing. You may also illustrate a proposition by its *consequences*, by shewing how many important inferences are included in it, and flow from it.

You may beautify a proposition by its *evidence*, by shewing that the truth, of which you speak, is discoverable by the light of nature; or by its *inevidence*, observing that it is not discoverable by the light of nature, but is a pure doctrine of revelation.

In fine, you may illustrate by the *person, who proposes* the subject; by the *state* in which he was when he proposed it; by the *persons to whom* it is proposed; by *circumstances of time and place*, &c. All these may give great openings; but they must be judiciously and discreetly used; for to attempt to make an assemblage of all these in the discussion of one proposition, would be trifling, endless, and pedantic.

Sometimes one single proposition *includes many truths*, which it will be necessary to distinguish: but, in doing this, take care that each truth, on which you intend to insist, be of some importance in religion, not too common, nor too much known. This your own good sense must discern.

Sometimes one proposition must be discussed in the *different*

views in which it may be taken ; and in this case you must remark those different relations.

Sometimes the doctrine contained in the proposition has different *degrees*, which it will also be necessary to remark.

Sometimes the proposition is *general*, and this generality seems to make it of little importance. In this case you must examine, whether some of its parts be not more considerable : if they be, you will be obliged to discuss these parts by a particular application. But I will give you examples of each.

First, To give the sense of a proposition neat and clear, and afterwards to confirm and illustrate it, let us take Eph. i. 18, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, may ye know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

This text must be divided into *two* parts. The first is the Apostle's *prayer*, *May God enlighten the eyes of your understanding !* The second is the *end* of this illumination, "that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Secondly, to give an example of *propositions, including divers truths*, which must be distinguished from each other. We cannot choose a more proper text than the remaining part of the passage which was just now explained: "That you may know," says St. Paul, "what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." The Apostle's proposition is, that by the illumination of grace, we understand the innumerable blessings to the enjoyment of which God calls us by his Gospel. Now this proposition includes many truths, which it will be necessary to distinguish.

1. That the Gospel is a *divine vocation*, a loud voice, which cries, "Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Therefore it is said in the fiftieth Psalm, "The Lord hath called the earth, from the rising of the sun, unto the going down thereof." The Church is not a rash tumultuous assembly, produced by hazard, as many societies seem to be. It is not a human society, which reason and natural interests have associated. It is a society that has God for its author ; for it is his word which calls, and his command that assembles us.

2. It is a vocation wherein God proposes something to our *hope* ; for which reason we are said to be "begotten again to

a lively hope." This may be discussed, either in opposition to a vocation of simple *authority*, where we are called to service without any recompence proposed (thus princes frequently command their subjects); or in opposition to a *seduction* to sin, which punishes our services with death: "The wages of sin is death," says St. Paul. (These words represent sin as a tyrant, who calls us to obey him in order to destroy us.) Or it may be considered in opposition to our *natural birth*, which introduces us to a scene of numberless distresses and miseries. All these vocations are either uncomfortable or hopeless, or dangerous, and tending to despair: but the call of the Gospel is a call to hope; not like Adam's, when God called him to be judged and condemned; "Adam, where art thou?" but like Abraham's, when the Lord said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and I will give thee the land whither thou goest:" not like that which Isaiah addressed to Hezekiah, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die;" but like that which Jesus sounded to Lazarus, "Lazarus, come forth!"

3. That this call proposes to our hope an *inheritance*; not a recompence proportioned to our merit; but a good, which God, as a father, bestows on us in virtue of adopting grace; a good which we have by communion with Jesus Christ; for we are "heirs of God" only as we are "joint-heirs of Jesus Christ." Farther, this is an unalienable inheritance, which we ourselves can never lose, and of which no other can deprive us. The ancient Jewish inheritances could never pass from families into foreign hands. This is an inheritance, in fine, in opposition to that felicity which God gave Adam as a hireling, under the title of wages; and not as a son, under the title of inheritance.

4. That this is a *heavenly inheritance* (for so must the last word *saints* be understood—in *sanctis*, in *holy*, or *heavenly places*.) The Apostle intends, not only to point out the nature of divine blessings, which are spiritual and heavenly, but to signify the *place* where we shall possess them, heaven, the mansion of the majesty of God.

5. That these are blessings of an *infinite abundance*, of an *inexpressible value*, for this is the meaning of these terms, "The riches of the glory of his inheritance," a way of speaking proper to the Hebrews, who, to express the grandeur or excellence of a thing, heap many synonymous expressions on

each other. Thus the Apostle, to represent to the Corinthians this same felicity of which he speaks here, calls it, "A weight of glory excellently excellent." And in this chapter, a little after our text, he speaks of "the exceeding greatness of his power, the working of his mighty power." Here then the "riches of the glory of his inheritance" signifies the value, the excellence, the abundance, the plenitude of this inheritance.

6. The Apostle would have us *know* the admirable greatness of this hope; for all our deviations from virtue, and attachments to the world, arise only from our ignorance of this glory: when we become acquainted with it, it is a chain that fastens, an attractive which allures, an invincible force that renders itself governess of all our affections. An ancient poet tells us of a golden chain which his Jupiter let down from heaven to earth: this thought may be sanctified, and applied to this subject, by saying, that the divine hope of our calling, and the riches of the glory of this inheritance, which God has prepared for us, is a golden chain descending from heaven to us. Similar to this is Christ's saying to his Apostles, "I will make you fishers of men." When they cast their mystical line into the sea, the wide world, they took an infinite number of fishes: but the hook, which alone rendered them successful in their divine fishing, was this great "hope of the calling of God, these riches of the glory of his inheritance in the" heavens.

7. Finally, the Apostle means that the knowledge which we have of this matter comes from *divine illumination*. It can come from no other influence, as we have already seen. It comes also infallibly from this: and when God illuminates us, it is not possible that we should be ignorant of what he designs to inform us of^k.

There are some propositions which must be considered in *different views*. For example, let us take these words, Psal. lxxix. 21, "They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." This passage must be considered in *four* different views: 1. In regard to David. 2. In regard to Jesus Christ. 3. In regard to the Church in general. 4. In regard to every believer in particular.

^k Perhaps these *seven* heads might have been more profitably included in the *three* following: 1. That Christians have a very glorious portion. 2. That it is their privilege to know their title to it. 3. That they must attain their knowledge by spiritual illumination.

So again in these words, Psal. cxxix. 2, "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth; yet have they not prevailed against me." These words belong, as to the Jewish, so to the Christian Church; and must be applied to both¹. In short, it is the same with all typical prophecies.

Of propositions, which have *degrees* to be remarked, take this example: "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people, which are in Egypt; and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters: for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians." Exod. iii. 7, 8. The propositions contained in this text, one touching the *affliction*, and the other concerning the *deliverance* of the people of God, must be considered according to their different degrees of accomplishment. For,

1. They were accomplished in the servitude and deliverance of Israel from *Egypt*.

2. In the divers servitudes and deliverances which afterward befell Israel, particularly in that of *Babylon*, which was a second *Egypt*.

3. They have been accomplished in a more excellent sense, in the servitude and deliverance of the Church at the coming of *Jesus Christ*, and at the preaching of the *Gospel*.

4. In the deliverance of the Church from the bondage of *antichrist*.

5. And, finally, they are yet to be fulfilled in the last and great deliverance at *Jesus Christ's second coming*.

In like manner discuss these words of *Isaiah*, quoted by St. Paul, "Behold me and the children whom the Lord hath given me." Heb. ii. 13. The first degree of the accomplishment of these words was in *Isaiah* and his children; the second, in *Jesus Christ* and his Disciples at the *first* preaching of the Gospel; and the third, in *Jesus* and his followers at the *last day*, when he shall present us to his Father to be glorified.

The same may be said of *Ezekiel's* vision of the bones which rose from the dead, for it has *three* degrees of accomplishment.

1. In the deliverance of the *Jews* from their Babylonian captivity. 2. In the deliverance of the *Church* by the ministry of the Gospel. 3. In the last *resurrection*. There are many

¹ See on Exod. xxxiv. 35.

passages of Scripture which must be explained in this manner.

In regard to those propositions, which seem *inconsiderable*, when taken in a general sense, but which are very important in a particular explication, [see Discourse on Jer. xxv. 5, 6.] they may be exemplified by these two passages:

Psal. xxxvii. 3, "Inhabit the land." At first sight, it seems as if there was nothing in these words; nevertheless, a particular explanation will discover many excellent truths in them.

So again, Prov. xv. 3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." In the general notion of this proposition, which only regards the omniscience of God, there does not seem to be any thing extremely important: but if you descend, as you ought, to particulars, you will perceive,

1. A providential knowledge *regulating* and determining all events, and directing them to their ends.

2. A knowledge of *approbation* in regard to the good, and of *condemnation* in regard to the wicked.

3. A knowledge of *protection* and recompence on the one side, and of *chastisement* and punishment on the other. So that this passage contains the whole doctrine of providence, the punishments of the wicked, and the benedictions which accompany the just.

CHAPTER VI.

OF TEXTS TO BE DISCUSSED BY WAY OF OBSERVATION.

SOME texts require a discussion by way of consideration, or *observation*. The following hints may serve for a general direction:

1. When texts are *clear* of themselves, and the matter well known to the *hearers*, it would be trifling to amuse the people with *explication*. Such texts must be taken as they are, that is, clear, plain, and evident, and only observations should be made on them^a.

2. Most *historical* texts must be discussed in this way; for, in a way of explication, there would be very little to

^a See on Isai. xlv. 23. or Mal. i. 16. or John xxi 17.

say^b. For example, what is there to *explain* in this passage? "Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at table with him." John xii. Would it not be a loss of time and labour to attempt to *explain* these words? and are they not clearer than any comments can make them? The way of observation, then, must be taken.

3. There are some texts which require *both* explication and observation, as when some parts may need explaining^c.

[Thus, Heb. xi. 24—26.

I. The choice of Moses. 1. The choice itself. 2. The principle by which he was actuated. 3. The end at which he aimed.

II. The excellency of that choice. It was, 1. Consonant with reason. 2. Conducive to his interests. 3. Honourable to his profession.]

For example, Acts i. 10, "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel." Here it will be necessary to *explain* in a few words the cause of their "looking steadfastly toward heaven;" for by lifting their eyes after their Divine Master, they expressed the inward emotions of their minds. It will be needful also to *explain* this other expression, "as he went up," and to *observe*, that it must be taken in its plain popular sense; and that it signifies not merely the removal of his visible presence, while he remained invisibly upon earth; but the absolute absence of his humanity. This is the natural sense of the words, and the observation is necessary to guard us against that sense which the Church of Rome imposes on them for the sake of transubstantiation. You may also briefly explain this other expression, "behold! two men," and shew that they were angels in human shapes. Here you may discuss the question of angelical appearances under human forms. Notwithstanding these brief explications, this is a text that must be discussed by way of observation.

Observe, in general, when explication and observation meet in one text, you must always explain the part that needs

^b See on Exod. xxxiii. 5, 6. or Job xxx. 25. or on Matt. xxvi. 56. or on Luke x. 10—16. or Luke xv. 8—10.

^c See on Deut. x. 1, 2. or on Zech. iv. 11—14.

explaining, *before* you make any observations; for observations must not be made till you have established the sense plain and clear.

4. Sometimes an *observation may be made by way of explication*, as when you would infer something important from the meaning of an original term in the text. For example; Acts ii. 1, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."

It will be proper here to explain and enforce the Greek word *ὁμοθυμαδόν*, which is translated "with one accord," for it signifies, that they had the same hope, the same opinions, the same judgment; and thus their unanimity is distinguished from an exterior and negative agreement, which consists in a mere profession of having no different sentiments, and in not falling out; but this may proceed from negligence, ignorance, or fear of a tyrannical authority. The uniformity of which the Church of Rome boasts, is of this kind; for, if they have no disputes and quarrels among them on religious matters (which, however, is not granted), it is owing to the stupidity and ignorance in which the people are kept, or to that indifference and negligence which the greatest part of that community discover towards religion, concerning which they seldom trouble themselves; or to the fear of that tyrannical domination of their prelates, with which the constitution of their Church arms them. Now, consider such an uniformity how you will, it will appear a false peace. If ignorance or negligence produce it, it resembles the quiet of dead carcases in a burying-ground, or the profound silence of night, when all are asleep; and, if it be owing to fear, it is the stillness of a galley-slave under the strokes of his officer, a mere shadow of acquiescence produced by timidity, and unworthy of the name of unanimity. The Disciples of Jesus Christ were not uniform in this sense: but their unanimity was inward and positive, they "were of one heart, and one soul." This explication, you perceive, is itself a very just observation, and there are very many passages of Scripture which may be treated of in the same manner.

5. Observations, for the most part, ought to be *theological*; that is to say, they should belong to a system of religion. Sometimes, indeed, we may make use of observations historical, philosophical, and critical; but these should be used sparingly and seldom; on necessary occasions, and when they cannot

well be avoided; and even then they ought to be pertinent, and not common, that they may be heard with satisfaction. Make it a law to be generally very brief on observations of these kinds, and to inform your audience that you only make them *en passant*.

There are, I allow, some cases, in which observations remote from theology are necessary to the elucidating of a text. When these happen, make your observations *professedly*, and explain and prove them. But, I repeat it again, in general, observations should be purely theological; either speculative, which regard the mysteries of Christianity, or practical, which regard morality: for the pulpit was erected to instruct the minds of men in religious subjects, and not to gratify curiosity; to inflame the heart, and not to find play for imagination.

6. Observations should not be proposed in scholastic style, nor in common-place guise. They should be seasoned with a sweet urbanity, accommodated to the capacities of the people, and adapted to the manners of good men. One of the best expedients for this purpose is a reduction of obscure matters to a natural, popular, modern air. You can never attain this ability, unless you acquire a habit of conceiving clearly of subjects yourself, and of expressing them in a free, familiar, easy manner, remote from every thing forced and far-fetched. All long trains of arguments, all embarrassments of divisions and subdivisions, all metaphysical investigations, which are mostly impertinent, and, like the fields, the cities, and the houses, which we imagine in the clouds, the mere creatures of fancy, all these should be avoided.

7. Care, however, must be taken to avoid the opposite extreme, which consists in making only poor, dry, spiritless observations, frequently said under pretence of avoiding school-divinity, and of speaking only popular things. Endeavour to think clearly, and try also to think nobly. Let your observations be replete with beauty, as well as propriety, the fruits of a fine fancy under the direction of a sober judgment. If you be inattentive to this article, you will pass for a contemptible declaimer, of mean and shallow capacity, exhausting yourself, and not edifying your hearers; a very ridiculous character^d!

^d The reader may form a pretty accurate idea of these, by reading the second of the annexed Skeletons, which was written *on purpose to illustrate them*. For a general and popular view of them he may consult the Discourse on John xix. 31—37.

To open more particularly some sources of observations, remark every thing that may help you to think and facilitate invention. You may rise from species to genus, or descend from genus to species. You may remark the different characters of a virtue commanded, or of a vice prohibited. You may inquire whether the subject in question be relative to any other, or whether it do not suppose something not expressed. You may reflect on the person speaking or acting, or on the condition of the person speaking or acting. You may observe time, place, persons addressed, and see whether there be any useful considerations arising from either. You may consider the principles of a word or action, or the good or bad consequences that follow. You may attend to the end proposed in a speech or action, and see if there be any thing remarkable in the manner of speaking or acting. You may compare words or actions with others similar, and remark the differences of words and actions on different occasions. You may oppose words and actions to contrary words and actions, either by contrasting speakers or hearers. You may examine the foundations and causes of words or actions, in order to develop the truth or falsehood, equity or iniquity, of them. You may sometimes make suppositions, refute objections, and distinguish characters of grandeur, majesty, meanness, infirmity, necessity, utility, evidence, and so on. You may advert to degrees of more or less, and to different interests. You may distinguish, define, divide, and, in a word, by turning your text on every side, you may obtain various methods of elucidating it. I will give you examples of all.

I.

RISE FROM SPECIES TO GENUS^c.

Psal. l. 14, "Sacrifice to God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High." In discussing this text, I would observe first the terms *Sacrifice thanksgiving*, and would elucidate them by going from the species to the genus. The dignity of sacrifice *in general* would lead me to observe—that it is the immediate commerce of a creature with his God; an action, in which it is difficult to judge whether earth ascend to heaven, or heaven descend to earth—that in almost all the other acts of religion the creature receives of his Creator; but

^c This is a topic peculiarly proper in an exordium.

in this the Creator receives of his creature—that the Lord of the universe, who needs nothing, and who eternally lives in a rich abundance, hath such a condescension as to be willing to receive offerings at our hands—that, of all dignities, that of the priesthood was the highest, for which reason the ancient priests dwelt in the tabernacle, or temple of God—that, when God divided Canaan among the children of Israel, each tribe had its portion except that of Levi, to which God assigned nothing. Why? because he loved them less? No, but because he gave them the priesthood, and because he, who had the priesthood, the altar, and the censer, had God for his portion, and, consequently, could have no need of temporal things. This is, you see, to rise from species to genus; for the text does not speak of sacrifice *in general*, but of the sacrifice of *praise* in particular: yet, when these general considerations are pertinent, they cannot fail of being well received^f.

II.

DESCEND FROM GENUS TO SPECIES.

An example may be taken from Psal. cxliii. 2, “Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.” Here you may aptly observe, in masters with regard to servants, and in God with regard to us, three senses of the phrase. There is a hand of *beneficence*, a hand of *protection* or deliverance, and a hand of *correction*. A servant expects favours from the hand of his master, not from that of a stranger. He looks to him for protection and deliverance in threatening dangers, and refuses all help, except that of his master. He expects correction from him when he commits a fault, and, when corrected, humbles himself under his master’s frown, in order to disarm him by tears of repentance. The application of these to the servants of God is easy. The word *succour* is general, and may very well be considered by descending from the genus to the species, and by observing the different occasions which we have for divine assistance, and, consequently, the different assistances and succours which God affords us—

^f See Discourse on Neh. vi. 11. where, instead of treating *specifically*, I. The proposal made, and II. His indignant rejection of it, the *general* subject of temptations, and of our conduct under them, is considered.

as the help of his *word*, to remove our ignorance, doubts, or errors—the help of his *providence*, to deliver us out of afflictions—the help of his *grace* and Spirit, to guard us from the temptations of the world, and to aid us against the weaknesses of nature—the help of divine *consolations*, to sweeten the bitterness of our exercises under distressing circumstances, and to give us courage to bear afflictions—the help of his *mercy*, to pardon our sins, and to restore to our consciences that tranquillity which they have lost by offending God. You will meet with a great number of texts which may be discussed in this manner: but great care must be taken not to strain the subject; for that would make you look like a school-boy. The best way is, to make only one general observation, and then to apply it to several particular subjects, collecting all at last into one general point of view.

III.

REMARK THE DIVERS CHARACTERS OF A VICE, WHICH IS FORBIDDEN, OR OF A VIRTUE, WHICH IS COMMANDED.

For example, 2 Thess. iii. 5, “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.” Here I should describe the characters of true love to God; and, perhaps, it might not be improper to subjoin the characters of expectation of Christ; and, that I might not seem to travel the same road twice, I would call the latter, emotions, which accompany hope in Christ.

To begin with the *characters* of true *love* to God.

1. The seat of it is the *heart*, which it penetrates and possesses. This distinguishes it from the feigned love of hypocrites, which is only in word, or in external actions, while their hearts are full of sinful self-love; so that it may be said of them as God once said of the Israelites, “This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”

2. It is a love that possesses the *whole* heart, without allowing a partition among different objects. Thus it is distinguished from that partial love which almost-Christians have, who have sometimes good desires towards zeal and repentance; but they are transient only, and never come to perfection, because the soul is divided, and occupied with

various worldly objects; and because the love of God, from which true repentance and zeal proceed, is not rooted in the heart: it is for this reason that Scripture commands us to love God with *all* our hearts, or, as David speaks, *to love him with a cordial affection*.

3. The love of God is not indeed alone in the heart of a good man; he may also love creatures; a father loves his children, a friend his friend, a master his servant, a king his subjects, a wife her husband; but the character of divine love in us is, on the one hand, to suffer no love contrary to itself in the heart, (for "no man can serve two masters," and the "love of the world is enmity against God,") and, on the other hand, love of God does not suffer any of the objects, the love of which is compatible with itself, to hold the *chief place* in the heart. This chief place is for God; to put him in a second place is to treat him opprobriously. Even to equal another object with him is to insult him; wherever he is, he must fill the throne himself; and, if a holy heart be an image of heaven, as it is in effect, God must reign there, and all must be submissive to him.

4. The emotions and acts of this love must be *infinite*, without measure as well as without subordination; without bounds as well as without partition. The reason is, our love must resemble its object; and its object is infinite; and this is one sense of this command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul." But how, say you, can we, who are finite creatures, perform infinite acts? I answer, the acts of the creature are, in a manner, infinite. This infinity consists, in my opinion, in two things. First, our emotions go to the utmost extent of our power, without coolness or caution; and, secondly, when we have stretched our souls to the utmost of our power, we cannot be content with ourselves, and we acknowledge our duty goes infinitely beyond our emotions and actions. Thus we ought to love with all the powers of our hearts, giving up (if I may so speak) our whole souls to him, and at the same time we shall feel a secret dissatisfaction with ourselves for not being able to love him enough.

5. This love, which has no bounds itself, *set bounds* to every emotion towards other objects. It is, as it were, an immense fire, emitting a few sparks, a few comparatively faint emotions towards inferior objects. So a king collects in his own person all the honours of his kingdom, and communicates some lucid

titles to inferior subjects: so the sea distributes of its boundless waters to rivers, fountains, and rills. Not only must we refuse to love what God has forbidden, and choose to respect what he allows us to love, but, to speak properly, we ought to love only what he commands us to love. This love should be in our hearts, amidst all our other affections, as a prince is among the officers of his army, or, to speak more strongly, as God himself is amongst all the creatures of the whole universe, giving to all life, motion, and being.

6. The love of God is accompanied with *humility* and *fear*, as a salt to prevent corruption; and by this mean we are kept from degrading liberty into licentiousness. In effect, how great mercy soever God has for us, it is the mercy of a master. How great soever his paternal tenderness is, it is the tenderness of a sovereign judge. His mercy, which is so amiable to us, is never separated from his infinite justice and power; and one of the most essential marks of our love to him is, to tremble and become nothing in his presence. These two things always go together. To fear him rightly, we must fear him as a father; and to love him rightly, we must love him as a sovereign Lord.

7. This love must in one respect *imitate* the love of God, from which ours proceeds; but in another respect it must *not* imitate his. It must imitate his, by diffusing itself where his diffuses itself; and follow it, even when it is bestowed upon enemies, according to our Lord's precept, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." But in another respect we must not imitate his love; for God's love to us is a jealous love, which cannot consent to our having any other object of supreme love besides himself: but our love to him can have no greater perfection than that which arises from a multiplicity of objects: our jealousy resembles that of the Prophet Elijah, who, being asked, when he was in the cave of Beer-sheba, what he did there, answered, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, and thrown down thine altars." This was St. Paul's jealousy, when he saw the Corinthians turned from the purity of his Gospel;

"I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Indeed, one of the most indubitable marks of our love to God is, to lament when his name is dishonoured, his word neglected or despised, and his commands violated.

8. A Christian's love to God principally consists in *obedience*. This, I grant, is not always a certain character; for how many persons are there who abstain from evil and do good, from principles of interest or fear rather than of love! but, however, it is as a negative character always sure; because it may always be concluded, that they, who do not obey God, do not love him; for all, who do love God, obey his laws. The reason is evident: all, who truly love God, have an ardent desire of being loved by him; and it is essential to love to desire a return of affection from its object. We cannot expect to be beloved of God, unless we strive to please him; nor can we please him without keeping his commandments. The love of God is always accompanied with a holy diligence to please him, and an awful fear of offending him. A true believer is always afraid lest any thing, through negligence or infirmity, should escape him, and clash with his duty, or provoke his God. This made St. Paul say, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" and elsewhere, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest, after I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away;" and hence those prayers of holy men, "Teach me thy ways, O Lord, I will walk in thy truth." "Unite my heart to fear thy name." "May God make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ!"

9. The love of God is not only continued in a Christian, but it is also inflamed under the rod of *correction*, contrary to that false love which subsists only in prosperity, and is quite extinct in adversity: for false love in religion flows from temporal interest, and is dependent on irregular self-love; but true love to God regards his glory and our salvation, two things which can never be separated, because God has united them so, that they constitute the very essence of religion. Whenever, then, it pleases God to chastise us, these two great interests (I mean his glory and our salvation) present themselves before our eyes; and whether we consider chastisements

as the fruits of our own sins which have offended God, or as paternal strokes to establish us in holiness, they cannot but inflame our love. Add to these, that when a believer sees his God frown, he cannot help apprehending, in some sense, that his wrath will go farther, that the Lord will forsake, and entirely leave him. Hence these expressions of David, "Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me!" "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" And hence Asaph says, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?"

The Tyrians, it seems, when Alexander besieged them, imagined they saw by some extraordinary motion, that the image of Apollo, in which all their hopes of protection were placed, intended to quit their city: to prevent this misfortune they fastened their God with chains of gold. This I own was a foolish superstition: but methinks we may sanctify the thought, and almost learn a believer's conduct from it. When he imagines his God means to forsake him, he holds him (if I may be allowed to say so) with chains of love; he throws around him the tender arms of his piety; he weeps on his bosom, and, to make use of a better example than that of the Tyrians, he *constrains* him, as the Disciples did at Emmaus, "Abide with me, for the day is far spent, and it is towards evening."

10. True love to God is not *superstitious*. Superstition usually springs from one of these *four* principles. Either, first, from *servile fear*, which makes people believe that God is always wrathful; and which invents means to appease him, employing for this purpose ridiculous practices unworthy of humanity itself; or, 2dly, from a *natural inclination*, which we all have, to *idolatry*, which makes men think they see some ray of the divinity in extraordinary creatures, and, on this account, they transfer a part of their devotion to them; or, 3dly, from *hypocrisy*, which makes men willing to discharge their obligations to God by grimace, and by zeal for external services; for which purpose they can perform a great number of any kind. Finally, from *presumption*, which makes men serve God after their own fancies, and establish such a worship as pleases and flatters themselves, without regarding whether they please God. All these appear in the superstitions of the

Church of Rome, the greatest part of which sprang from *fear* of the fire of purgatory; as mortifications, masses, jubilees, indulgences, penal satisfactions, and many more of the same kind. It is also evident, that some came from that dreadful *propensity* natural to all mankind to deify creatures; to this may be referred the worshipping of images, the invocations of saints and angels, the custom of swearing by creatures, the adoration of relics, pilgrimages, the adoration of the host, and many such things. Nor is it less true that *hypocrisy* produced others, as beads, chaplets, rosaries, prayers by tale, frequent fasts, visiting holy places, &c. And, finally, some came from human vanity and *presumption*, as festivals, processions, the magnificence of churches; and, in general, all pompous ceremonies in the worship of God. All these are contrary to the love of God, which is free from superstition. It is superior to servile fear, and accompanied with a persuasion that God is good, and that he loves us. It has only God for its object; it acknowledges between God and his creatures, however amiable the latter may be, an infinite distance, and, consequently, cannot bestow any part of that worship upon them, which is due to him alone. It is sincere and solid, more attentive to the interior than to the outward appearance; for, having its principal seat in the heart, it rectifies a man's sentiments, whence, as from a sacred source, good works flow. In a word, it is humble and submissive to the will of God, which it regards as the only rule of its duty, without paying any respect to the vanity of sense, or the caprice of the human mind.

11. Genuine love to God is tranquil and *peaceable*, acquiescing in the ways of Providence without complaining, happy in itself, without inquietude and without chagrin, flying from quarrels and divisions, easy and gentle in all things, yielding in every thing, except in the service of God and the grand interest of salvation, in which love itself is inflexible, and incapable of compounding.

12. Real love is always *active*. Its tranquillity is not negligence; it is lively and energetical, always in peace, but always in action; like the heavens, whence it came, without noise, in profound silence, perpetually moving, and incessantly shedding benign influences: it is not content to seek God in his temples only, but it pursues him in houses, chambers, and closets; it rises after him to heaven; it enjoys him in the heart, where it entertains and adores him; it goes

even to seek him in his members, and chiefly in the poor, whose secret necessities it inquires after, and endeavours to relieve.

Finally, One of the greatest evidences of love to God is, *spontaneous* obedience, not waiting for chastisements to awake us, after we have fallen into sin, but returning immediately to repentance. Indeed, tardy repentances, which come after we have exhausted the patience of God, and drawn the strokes of his rod upon us, are much more likely to be effects of nature, than of love to God. Self-love has so great a share in such a conduct, that, if we do not attribute our repentance wholly to it, we must in great part. Yet it is certain, when repentance does not flow wholly from love to God, it is not wholly heavenly and spiritual; it is a compound of heaven and earth, divine faith and human prudence; and so much as it has of nature and sinful self-interest, so much it loses of its worth and excellence. Genuine love does not then wait for carnal solicitations, nor till afflictions inform us of our state; it freely comes to our aid, and constrains us to return to God, even before we feel the effects of his indignation. So much for the characters of love^g.

In regard to the *emotions* included in the words *patient waiting*, you may remark, 1. That the coming of Jesus Christ being the subject in question, the expectation of a believer is a true and real *hope*, directly opposite to the expectation of the wicked, which is a fear. The latter consider Jesus Christ on this occasion as their judge, and enemy, who will avenge himself, punish all their sins, and plunge them for ever into perdition. Believers, on the contrary, consider him as their Head, their Husband, their Saviour, who will come to raise them from dust and misery, and to exalt them to his glorious kingdom. The wicked, in their fore-views, resemble the devils, who, at Christ's first appearance, exclaimed, "Let us alone! what have we to do with

^g The multiplying of divisions and subdivisions is, in the Editor's judgment, a great fault in composition. They should consist only of such a number as will fairly embrace the whole subject, and may easily be remembered. All that really belongs to the subject in these *thirteen* heads might have been introduced under the three following: True love to God is, 1. *Supreme*, possessing the heart, the whole heart, &c. 2. *Uniform*, as well under his corrections as under his smiles. 3. *Obediential*, instigating us, not to an observance of superstitious rites, but to an humble and active performance of his revealed will.

thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?" but the righteous imitate those who attended his public entry into Jerusalem; "Hosanna," said they, "blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

2. This expectation is accompanied with a holy and ardent *desire*, as being an expectation of the greatest blessings. "Come, Lord Jesus," says the Church, "Lord Jesus, come." Such was David's expectation, when he was among the Philistines; "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." The desire of a believer is not less fervent, or (to speak more properly) it is far more ardent, when he meditates on his entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem, where we shall "hunger and thirst no more, for the Lamb shall feed us, and lead us to fountains of living waters." What the first appearance of Christ in the flesh was to the ancient Church, that his second manifestation is to us, with this difference, that then he was to appear in grace, whereas now we expect him in glory—then he was to appear in the "form of a servant," and in the "likeness of sinful flesh;" but hereafter he will appear in the "form of God," thinking it "not robbery to be equal with God." As he was then "the desire of all nations," how should he not now be the desire of all believers?

3. This desire is accompanied with a *holy inquietude*, almost like what we feel when we expect an intimate friend, of whose coming we are sure, but are uncertain about the time: or, if you will, such as an oppressed and enslaved people feel, while they wait for a deliverer; or such as an affectionate consort feels, while she waits for the return of her lord. On these occasions days and hours move slowly, time is anticipated, futurity is enjoyed, and there is a prelibation of the expected pleasure. This is the holy inquietude which St. Paul attributes to the creatures in general, saying, They "groan and travail in pain together with the earnest expectation of the manifestation of the sons of God." How much more then must believers do so!

4. But this inquietude does not prevent our *possessing our souls in patience*; for it does not proceed to murmuring, but submits to the will of God; knowing that times and seasons are in his own power: "if he tarry, wait for him," as St. Paul after Habakkuk says, Heb. x. 37; that is, be not impatient, do not murmur, for *he will certainly come, and will*

not tarry. They are the profane only who say, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." We feel then an inquietude, but an inquietude blended with *submission* to the will of God. "Why," says the believer, "art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

5. This expectation necessarily includes a holy *preparation*, and such a preparation as relates to the majesty of Him whom we expect, the greatness of the judgment that he will come to execute, and the eternal benefits of which we hope to partake. We must not imitate that wicked servant in the paraole, who said, "My Lord delays his coming," and who, under cover of that delay, beat his fellow-servants. When Esther was to appear before Ahasuerus, she spent many days beforehand in preparing herself, adorning herself with her most costly habits, that she might appear before him in a proper manner. Such is the waiting of a believer; he employs all his life-time to prepare for that solemn hour, when eternity will begin.

You might easily take the characters of *vices* from this pattern of characterizing virtues: however, I will add an example on *avarice*, taking for a text Heb. xiii. 5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have."

1. Avarice is a disposition so gross, that it *obscures* the understanding and *reason* of a man, even so far as to make him think of profit where there is nothing but loss, and imagine that to be economy which is nothing but ruin. Is it not in this manner that a covetous man, instead of preventing maladies by an honest and frugal expense, draws them upon himself by a sordid and niggardly way of living; and, by this means, brings himself under an unavoidable necessity of consuming one part of his substance to recover a health, which, by an excessive parsimony, he has lost? There are even some who bring inevitable death upon themselves, rather than spend any thing to procure necessary relief; and are impertinent enough to imagine, that riches had better be without a possessor, than a possessor without riches; as if man were made for money, and not money for man.

But, 2. this would be but little, if avarice affected only the avaricious themselves; it goes much farther, it renders a

man *useless to society*. It subverts the idea of our living to assist one another; for a covetous man is useless to the whole world. He resembles that *earth*, of which St. Paul speaks, which “drinketh in the rain, that comes often upon it, and beareth only thorns and briers.” He is an unfruitful tree, a gulf which draws in waters from all parts, but from which no stream runs; or, if you will, an avaricious man is like death, that devours all, and restores nothing; whence it comes to pass, that no man is in general so much despised, while he lives, as a miser; and no man’s death is so much desired as his. He never opens his treasures till he is leaving the world; he, therefore, can never receive the fruits of gratitude, because his favours are never conferred till his death.

3. Farther, this vice not only renders a man useless to society, but it even makes him hurtful and *pernicious* to it. There is no right so inviolable, no law so holy, which he will not violate greedily to amass riches, and cautiously to preserve them. How many violent encroachments, how many criminal designs, how many dark and treasonable practices, how many infamies and wickednesses, have proceeded from this perverse inclination! If a covetous man is barren in kindnesses, he is fruitful in sins and iniquities. There are no boundaries which he cannot pass, no barriers which he cannot readily go over, to satisfy his base passion for money.

4. By this we may already perceive how *incompatible* this vice is with true faith, and *with the genius of Christianity*. The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of love and charity, always beneficent, always ready to prevent the necessities of our Christian brethren; kind and full of compassion, inquiring into the wants of others, and, without asking, seeking means to prevent them. But avarice, on the contrary, makes a man hard, cruel, pitiless, beyond the reach of complaints and tears, rendering the miser not only jealous of the prosperity of his neighbour, but even making him consider the pittance of the miserable as objects of his covetous desires.

5. It is not without reason that St. Paul calls avarice *idolatry*; for one of the principal characters of this cursed inclination is a making gold and silver one’s god. It is money, in effect, which the covetous adores, it is this that he supremely loves, this he prefers above all other things; it is his last end, his life, his confidence, and all his happiness. He who fears God, consecrates to him his first thoughts, and

devotes to his glory and service the chief of his cares ; to his interests, the whole of his heart ; and for the rest, commits himself to the care of his providence. It is the same with a covetous man in regard to his treasures ; he thinks only of them, he labours only to increase and preserve them, he feels only for them ; he has neither rest nor hope which is not founded on his riches ; he would offer incense to them, could he do it without expense.

6. It is surprising, and sometimes sufficiently diverting, to see in what manner all the other inclinations of a miser, good and bad, virtues and vices, his love and his hatred, his joy and his sorrow, respect and obey his avarice. They move or rest, act or do not act, agreeably to the orders which this criminal passion gives them. If he be naturally civil, mild, and agreeable in his conversation, he will not fail to lay aside all his civilities and good manners, when his avarice tells him he may get something by doing so ; and, on the contrary, when he has received some injury, when some insult has been offered him, which is a just ground of resentment, you may see, in an instant, his wrath is removed, and all his vehemence abated, in hope of a little money offered to appease him, or in fear of a small expense to gratify his resentment. If an object of public joy or sorrow offer itself to his view, simply considering it in a general view, he will be glad or sorry, according to the nature of the thing in question ; but should this occasion of public joy interest him ever so little, or in any manner prejudice his pretensions, all on a sudden you will see all his joy turned into sorrow. In like manner, when a public calamity gives him an opportunity of gaining any thing, all his sorrow is turned into joy. If he ardently loves any one, he will love him no longer, if he begin to cost him any thing ; avarice will turn all his love into indifference and coldness. If reason and common honesty oblige him to be of a party who have justice on their side, he will maintain and even exaggerate their rights, and defend the equity of them, while his purse is not engaged : engage his purse, and it is no longer the same thing : what was just is become now unjust to him, he has quickly *whys* and *howevers* in his mouth—but, *however*, we were mistaken in such a point—*why* should we be obstinate in such or such a thing? &c.

In fine, his avarice gives the *colour* and tint to *every subject*, it is the sole rule and measure, it makes things good or bad,

just or unjust, reasonable or unreasonable, according to its pleasure: crimes are no longer crimes, if they agree with avarice; virtues are no longer virtues, when they oppose it: she reigns over the ideas of a miser's mind and the emotions of his heart, sole arbitress in the judgments of his mind, sole directress in the consultations of his heart, sole governess of all his passions. Aristotle's definition of nature can be no where better applied,—she is the principle of motion and of rest: for she does all that the centurion in the Gospel did; she says to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh, Do this, and he doeth it; yea, she goes farther than the centurion went; for she says, Pause, and all things pause, Cease, and all things cease to be^h.

IV.

OBSERVE THE RELATION OF ONE SUBJECT TO ANOTHER.

For example, always when in Scripture God is called a *Father*, the relation of that term to *children* is evident, and we are obliged not only to remark the paternal inclinations which are in God towards us, and the advantages which we receive from his love, but also the duties to which we are bound as children of such a Father. The same may be said of all these expressions of Scripture, "God is our God," we are "his people"—he is our "portion," we are his "heritage"—he is our "master," we are his "servants"—he is our "king," we are the "subjects of his kingdom"—he is our "prophet or teacher," we are his "disciples"—with many more of the same kind. When we meet with such single and separate, they must be discussed in relation to one another, and this relation must be particularly considered. Thus, when the "kingdom" of God, or of Jesus Christ, is spoken of, all things relative to this kingdom must be considered—as, its laws—arms—throne—crown—subjects—extent of dominion—palace where the king resides, &c. So when our mystical "marriage" with Jesus Christ is spoken of, whether it be where he is called a bridegroom, or his Church a bride, you should, after you have explained these expressions, turn your attention to relative things—as the love of Jesus Christ to us, which made him consent to

^h These *seven* heads might, as in the foregoing instance, have been reduced to *three*. Avarice, 1. Perverts our judgment; 2. Destroys our happiness; 3. Is incompatible with true religion.

this mystical marriage—the dowry, that we bring him, our sins and miseries—the communication, which he makes to us, both of his name and benefits—the rest, that he grants us in his house, changing our abode—the banquet at his divine nuptials—the inviolable fidelity which he requires of us—the right and power he acquires over us—the defence and protection which he engages to afford us: but when these relative things are discussed, great care must be taken neither to insist on them too much, nor to descend to mean ideas, nor even to treat of them one after another, in form of a parallel; for nothing is more tiresome than treating these apart, and one after another. They must, then, be associated together; a body composed of many images must be formed; and the whole must be always animated with the sensible, and the spiritual. I think a preacher ought to content himself with making one single observation, or, at the most, two, in case the relative things are too numerous to be collected into one point of view. In such a case, you must endeavour to reduce them to two classes, but in two different orders; and always make the difference perceptible, so that it may not be said you have made two observations of what was naturally but one.

V.

OBSERVE WHETHER SOME THINGS BE NOT SUPPOSED,
WHICH ARE NOT EXPRESSED.

This is a source of invention different from the former; for the former is confined to things really relative; but this speaks in general of things *supposed*, which have no relation to each other. For example, when we speak of a change, what they call the terminus *a quo* necessarily supposes the terminus *ad quem*; and the terminus *ad quem* supposes the terminus *a quo*.

A covenant supposes two contracting parties—a reconciliation effected, or a peace made, supposes war and enmity—a victory supposes enemies, arms, and a combat—life supposes death, and death life—the day supposes night, and the night day: sometimes there are propositions, which necessarily suppose others, either because they are consequences, depending on their principles, or because they are truths naturally connected with others. It is always very important to understand well what things are supposed in a text; for sometimes

several useful considerations may be drawn from them, and not unfrequently the very expressions in the text include them.

For example, Rom. xii. 17: "Recompense to no man evil for evil." In discussing this text, you may very properly observe the truths, which are *implied*, or supposed in the words; as, 1. The *disorder* into which sin has thrown mankind, so that men are exposed to receive injuries and insults from each other. A society of sinners is only a shadow of society; they are actually at war with each other, and, like the Midianitish army, turning every one his sword against his companion. The spirit of the world is a spirit of dispersion rather than of association. Different interests, diversities of sentiments, varieties of opinions, contrarieties of passions, make a perpetual division; and the fruits of this division are insults and injuries. It may be said of each in such societies, as of Ishmael in the prophecy, "His hand is against every man, and every man's hand against him."

2. We must not imagine that faith, and the dignity of a Christian calling, raise the *disciple of Christ* above injuries: on the contrary, they expose him oftener to evils than others; as well because God himself will have our faith tried, that we may arrive at heaven *through many tribulations*, as because a Christian profession necessarily divides believers from infidels. The world and sin form a kind of communion between the wicked and worldly, which produces a mutual forbearance and friendship: but there is no communion between a believer and an unbeliever, any more than between light and darkness, Christ and Belial. Thence come all the persecutions of the Church, and thence will good men continue to meet with opposition from the wicked, to the end of time. Jesus Christ, when he sent his Apostles, did not fail to apprise them of this: he said, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves;" and again, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

You may make an observation on each of these supposed truths; and, having established the Apostle's precept, by shewing that private revenge is contrary to the laws of Christianity, and incompatible with true piety, you may observe a third supposed truth:

3. That the Gospel not only forbids resentment and revenge; it even commands us to *pardon* offences; and, farther,

obligeth us to *do good* to our enemies, and to *pray* for our persecutors, according to the precept of Jesus Christ, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you:" and, according to the doctrine of St. Paul in another place, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink."

It remains that you take care, in treating supposed truths,

1. Not to *fetch* them too *far*, or to bring them about by long circuits of reasoning. Avoid this for two reasons: first, because you would render your discourse *obscure* by it; for every body is not capable of seeing truths, which are very distant from the text: and, secondly, because by this means you might bring in *all* the whole body of divinity into your text; which attempt would be vicious, and contrary to the rules of good sense. Of supposed truths, you must choose the most *natural*, and those which lie nearest the text.

In the 2d place, do not *enlarge* on implied truths: it is proper, indeed, that hearers should know them; but they are not principal articles.

And, 3dly, take care also that these supposed things be *important*, either for instruction in general, or for casting light particularly on the text, or for consolation, or for the correction of vice, or practice of piety, or some useful purpose; otherwise you would deliver trifling impertinencies under the name of implied truths.

VI.

REFLECT ON THE PERSON SPEAKING OR ACTING.

For an example, let us take the last-mentioned text of St. Paul, "Recompense to no man evil for evil." Here you may very pertinently remark, 1. That this precept is more beautiful in the mouth of *St. Paul* than it could have been in that of any other man. The reason is this; he, of all the men in the world, had the greatest reason for resentment upon worldly principles; for never was there a man more persecuted, never a man more unjustly persecuted than he; he was persecuted by his own countrymen the Jews, persecuted by the Gentiles, persecuted by false brethren, persecuted by false apostles, persecuted when he preached the Gospel, persecuted even by those for whose salvation he was labouring, persecuted to prison, to banishment, to bonds, to blood; how amiable, then,

is such a precept in the mouth of such a man! How forcible is such a precept, supported by one of the greatest examples we can conceive! by the example of a man whose interest seems to dictate a quite contrary practice! When we give such precepts to the worldly, they never fail to say to us, Yes, yes! you talk finely! you have never been insulted as we have! had you met with what we have, you would talk otherwise! But there is no reason to say so to St. Paul, any more than to Jesus Christ, his Master, the Author of this divine morality; for who was ever so persecuted as Jesus Christ? and, after him, who suffered more than his servant St. Paul?

2. You may also very properly remark, that, to take a different view of the Apostle Paul, no man was more obliged to teach and love such a morality than *himself*. Why? Because of all those, whom God, in his ineffable mercy, had called to the knowledge of the truth, he had been the most concerned in cruel efforts of rage against God and his Church; all inflamed with fury, he went from Jerusalem to Damascus, to ravage the flock of Jesus Christ. In this raging violence of his hatred, God made him feel his love, pardoned his sins, softened his heart, and from heaven cried to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Who, then, could be more obliged to preach mercy than this man, to whom God had shewed so much mercy? Might he not say, when he gave these rules of morality, what he said on another subject, "I have received of the Lord that which I deliver unto you;" I have received the same mercy which I teach you. Add to this, the Apostle had not only met with pardoning love to an enemy on God's part, but he had also experienced it from the *Church*. Far from rendering him evil for evil, far from avenging his persecutions, the disciples of Christ reached out the arms of their love to him, received him into their communion, and numbered him with the Apostles of Jesus Christ.

VII.

REFLECT ON THE STATE OF THE PERSONS SPEAKING OR ACTING.

Thus, in explaining 1 Thess. v. 16, "Rejoice evermore," you must not fail to consider the state of St. Paul, when he wrote that epistle; for he was at Athens, engaged in that superstitious city, where, as it is said in the seventeenth

of Acts, his spirit was "stirred in him," observing "the city wholly given to idolatry;" where he was treated as "a babbler, a setter forth of strange gods," and where, in short, he was the object of Athenian ridicule and railery. Yet, amid so many just causes of grief, he exhorts the Thessalonians always to preserve their spiritual joy; not that he meant to render them insensible to the evils which he suffered, nor to the afflictions of the new-born Church; but because our spiritual afflictions, I mean those which we suffer for the glory of God and the good of his Church, are not incompatible with peace and joy of conscience: on the contrary, it is particularly in these afflictions that God gives the most lively joys, because then he bestows on his children more abundant measures of his grace, and more intimate communion with himself. Moreover, on these sad occasions we generally become better acquainted with the providence of God, we feel an assurance that nothing happens without his order, and that, happen what will, "all things work together for good to them that love God." This gives us true rest, a joy which nothing is capable of disturbing.

VIII.

REMARK THE TIME OF A WORD OR ACTION.

For example, St. Paul, in his first Epistle to Timothy, requires, that in the public services of the Church, prayers should be made for "all men;" but "first for kings, and for those that were in authority." Here it is very natural to remark the time. It was when the Church and the Apostles were every where persecuted; when the faithful were the objects of the hatred and calumny of all mankind, and, in particular, of the cruelty of these tyrants. Yet none of this rough treatment could stop the course of Christian charity. St. Paul not only requires every believer to pray for all men; but he would have it done in *public*, that all the world might know the maxims of Christianity, always kind, patient, and benevolent. Believers consider themselves as bound in duty to all men, though men do nothing to oblige them to it. He was aware, malicious slanderers would call this worldly policy and human prudence, and would say, Christians only meant to flatter the great, and to court their favour; yet even this calumny does not prevent St. Paul; he orders them to pray

publicly, and *first*, for civil governors. We ought always to discharge our duty, and, for the rest, submit to the unjust accounts that men give of our conduct.

IX.

OBSERVE PLACE.

St. Paul says to the Philippians, "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The place where he writes this, furnishes a very beautiful consideration. He was then in *prison* at Rome, loaded with chains, and deprived of his liberty; yet he speaks as if he were as much at liberty as any man in the world; as able to act as he pleased, and to dispose of himself as ever: he talks of having entered a course, running a race, forgetting things behind, pressing toward those that were before, and, in short, of hoping to gain a prize; all these are actions of a man enjoying full liberty. How could he, who was in prison, be at the same time on a race-course? how could he run, who was loaded with irons? how could he hope to win a prize, who every day expected a sentence of death? But it is not difficult to reconcile these things: his bonds and imprisonment did not hinder the course of his faith and obedience. His prison was converted into an agreeable stadium, and death for the Gospel might well be considered under the image of a complete victory; for a martyr gains an unfading crown as a reward of his sufferings.

X.

CONSIDER THE PERSONS ADDRESSED.

Let us again take St. Paul's words for an example: "Recompense to no man evil for evil," Rom. xii. 17. They, to whom the Apostle addressed these words, were *Romans*, whose perpetual maxim was violently to revenge public injuries, and totally to destroy those who intended to destroy them, or had offered them any affronts; witness the Carthaginians and Corinthians. They totally destroyed Carthage, because she had carried her arms into Italy by Hannibal's means, and had been upon the point of ruining Rome. Corinth they sacked and burnt for having affronted their ambassadors. You may

also remark this particular circumstance; that, although the Romans had succeeded in avenging their injuries, and the empire owed its grandeur to such excesses, yet their success did not hinder the Apostle from saying, "Recompense to no man evil for evil;" because neither examples nor successes ought to be the rules of our conduct, but solely the will of God and the law of Christianity.

XI.

EXAMINE THE PARTICULAR STATE OF PERSONS ADDRESSED.

For example, "Recompense to no man evil for evil." St. Paul writes to Romans; but to Roman *Christians*, who saw themselves hated and persecuted by their fellow-citizens, and, in general, abused by the whole world. Yet, however reasonable resentment might appear at first sight, the Apostle would not have them obey such passions as the light of reason, the instinct of nature, and the desire of their own preservation, might seem to excite: he exhorted them to leave vengeance to God, and advised them only to follow the dictates of love. The greatest persecutors of the primitive Christians were the Jews, on whom the Roman Christians could easily have avenged themselves under various pretexts; for the Jews were generally hated and despised by all other nations, and nothing could be easier than to avail themselves of that public hatred to which the religion of the Jews exposed them. Nevertheless, St. Paul not only says in general, "Render not evil for evil;" but, in particular, "Recompense to *no man* evil for evil;"—as if he had said, do not injure those on whom you could most easily avenge yourselves; hurt not the most violent enemies of the name of Jesus Christ, and of the Christian profession; not even those who have crucified your Saviour, and every day strive to destroy his Gospel.

XII.

CONSIDER THE PRINCIPLES OF A WORD OR ACTION.

For example, John v. 14: "Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." This was the language of Jesus Christ to the man whom he had just before healed of an infirmity of thirty-eight years' standing. Him Jesus now found in the temple. It is not imaginable that this

meeting was fortuitous, and unforeseen to Jesus Christ: his providence, no doubt, conducted the man that way, directed him to the temple, whither he himself went to seek him. Examine, then, upon what *principles* Jesus Christ went to seek this miserable sinner; and you will find, 1. He went in great *love* to the poor man: he went in that same benevolence which inclined him to do good to all who had need, and in every place that he honoured with his presence. Jesus was, as it were, a public source of benefits; his hands every where bestowed beneficent gifts, and he even sought occasions when they did not present themselves. 2. He went by an engagement of *ancient* love, which he had made on behalf of this paralytic: his second favour flowed from his first; nor would he leave his work imperfect. Thus, it is said, in regard to his Disciples, "Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end." The bounty of Jesus Christ resembles that of his eternal Father, who calls, justifies, and, in the end, glorifies those whom he first predestinated: and on this, as on one of the principal foundations, St. Paul establisheth our hope for the future; "God having begun a good work in us, will perform it to the day of Christ:" and elsewhere, "God is faithful, who hath called you to the fellowship of his Son." 3. It was by a principle of *wisdom* and foreknowledge, that Jesus Christ sought this paralytic patient in the temple, in order to teach him his duty, to furnish him with the means of doing it, and to give him a more particular knowledge of the Friend who had healed him; for he well knew that a tender faith, such as that of this man was, had need of fresh and continual aid, as a young plant needs a prop to support it against winds and storms.

In like manner, if you had to examine these words of Jesus Christ to the Samaritan woman, "Go and call thy husband," (John iv.) you might examine the intention of Jesus Christ in this expression. He did not speak thus because he was ignorant what sort of a life this woman lived: he knew that, to speak properly, she had no husband. It was then, 1. A word of *trial*; for the Lord said this to give her an opportunity of making a free confession, "I have no husband." 2. It was also a word of *kind reproof*; for he intended to convince her of the sin in which she lived. 3. It was also a word of *grace*; for the censure tended to the woman's consolation. 4. It was, farther, a word of *wisdom*; for our Lord intended to take

occasion at this meeting to discover himself to her, and more clearly to convince her that he had a perfect knowledge of all the secrets of her life; as he presently proved, by saying, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou hast now is not thy husband."

Were you going to explain the ninth verse of the first of Acts, where it is said, "When Jesus was taken up, his Disciples beheld him," it would be proper to remark the sentiments of the Disciples in that moment, and to shew from what principles proceeded that attentive and earnest looking after their Divine Master, while he ascended to heaven.

XIII.

CONSIDER CONSEQUENCES.

Thus, when you explain the doctrine of God's mercy, it is expedient (at least sometimes) to remark the *good* and lawful uses which we ought to make of it. These uses are, to renounce ourselves—to be sensible of our infinite obligations to God, who pardons so many sins with so much bounty—to consecrate ourselves entirely to his service, as persons over whom he has acquired a new right—and to labour incessantly for his glory, in gratitude for what he has done for our salvation.

You may also observe the false and *pernicious* consequences which ungrateful and wicked men, who sin that grace may abound, pretend to derive from this doctrine. They say, We are no longer to consider justice now we are under grace; the more we sin, the more God will be glorified in pardoning us—this mercy will endure all the time of our lives, and therefore it will be enough to apply to it at the hour of death—with many more such false consequences, which must be both clearly stated, and fully refuted.

It is much the same with the doctrine of the efficacious grace of the Holy Ghost in our conversion; for the just and lawful consequences which are drawn from it, are, 1. That such is the greatness of our depravity, it can be rectified only by Almighty aid; 2. That we should be humble, because there is nothing good in us; 3. That we should ascribe all the glory of our salvation to God, who is the only author of it; 4. That we must adore the depths of the great mercy of our God, who freely gave his Holy Spirit to convert us.

You must remark at the same time the abuses and false consequences which insidious sophisters draw from this doctrine; as, that since the conversion of men is by the almighty power of God, it is needless to preach his word, and to address to them, on God's part, exhortations, promises, and threatenings—that it is in vain to tell a sinner it is his duty to turn to God, as without efficacious grace (which does not depend upon the sinner) he cannot do it—that it has a tendency to make men negligent about their salvation to tell them it does not depend on their power. These, and such like abuses, must be proposed and solidly refuted.

Moreover, this method must be taken when you have occasion to treat of the doctrines of election and reprobation—the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ's blood—and, in general, almost all religious subjects require it; for there is not one of them all which is not subject to use and abuse. Take care, however, when you propose these good and bad consequences, that you do it properly, and when an occasion naturally presents itself; for were they introduced with any kind of affectation and force, it must be disagreeable.

In general, then, this way of good and bad consequences ought to be used when there is reason to fear some may infer bad consequences, and when they seem to flow from the text itself; for in this case they ought to be prevented and refuted, and contrary consequences opposed against them.

XIV.

REFLECT ON THE END PROPOSED IN AN EXPRESSION OR AN ACTION.

Although this is not very different from the way of principles, of which we have already spoken, yet it may afford a variety in discussing them.

If, for example, you were speaking of justification, in the sense in which St. Paul taught it, you must observe the *ends* which the Apostle proposed, as, 1. To put a just difference between Jesus Christ and Moses, the Law and the Gospel, and to shew against those who would blend them together, and so confound both in one body of religion, that they cannot be so united. 2. To preserve men from that Pharisaical pride which reigned among the Jews, who “sought to establish their own righteousness, and not the righteousness of God. 3. To take away such inadequate remedies as the law, by way of shadow,

exhibited for the expiation of sins, as sacrifices and purifications; as well as those which Pagan superstition proposed, such as washing in spring water, offering victims to their gods, &c. 4. To bring men to the true and only atonement for sin, which is the blood of Jesus Christ.

XV.

CONSIDER WHETHER THERE BE ANY THING REMARKABLE
IN THE MANNER OF THE SPEECH OR ACTION.

For example; "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Rom. viii. 37. You may remark, that there is a more than ordinary force in these words, "more than conquerors;" for they express an heroic triumph. He does not simply say, We bear our trials with patience; he not only says, We shall conquer in this conflict; but he affirms, "We are more than conquerors." It is much that faith resists trials without being oppressed; it is more to conquer these trials after a rude combat; but to affirm, the believer shall be *more than a conqueror*, is as much as to say, he shall conquer without a combat, and triumph without resistance; it is as much as to say, he shall make trials the matter of his joy and glory, (as the Apostle says, "We glory in tribulation,") considering them not as afflictions and sorrows, but as divine honours and favours. This was also the Apostle's mind when he wrote to the Philippians, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." He considers sufferings as gifts of the liberality of God, for which the faithful are obliged to be thankful. So in this other passage, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." You may here remark the heroism and magnanimity of St. Paul. His faith seems to defy all the powers of nature. He assembles them all—*life—death—angels*, &c. to triumph over them, and to exult in their defeat. This language marks a full persuasion of the favour of God, and an invincible confidence in his love.

Such remarks as these may be made upon many expressions of Jesus Christ, wherein are discovered dignity and majesty,

which cannot belong to any mere creature; as when he says, "Before Abraham was, I am." "Whilst I am in the world, I am the light of the world." "All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." There are many passages of the same kind.

XVI.

COMPARE WORDS AND ACTIONS WITH SIMILAR WORDS AND ACTIONS.

The Evangelist speaks of the things "that Jesus began to do and to teach," Acts i. 1. Now he says the same of Moses, "He was mighty in words and in deeds," Acts vii. 22. Here you may observe, that these two things joined together, *doing and teaching*, are distinguishing characters of a true prophet, who never separates practice from doctrine. You may then make an edifying comparison between Moses and Jesus Christ: both *did* and *taught*; but there was a great difference between the *teaching* of one and that of the other. One taught justice, the other mercy—one abased, the other exalted—one terrified, the other comforted. There was also a great difference between the *deeds* of the one, and those of the other. Most of the miracles of Moses were miracles of *destruction*, insects, frogs, hail, and others of the same kind, with which he chastised the Egyptians. But the miracles of Jesus Christ were always miracles of *benevolence*, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, &c.

So again, when the infidelity of the Jews, in rejecting the Messiah, is discussed, you may examine their prejudices and their maxims, as they are narrated in the Gospel; and these you may compare with those of the Church of Rome in rejecting the reformation; for they are very much alike.

So again, when you consider St. Paul's answers to the objections of the Jews, who pleaded that they were the people of God, and that his covenant belonged to Abraham and his posterity, you may observe, that these answers are like ours to the Roman Church, when they affirm they are the Church of God. As the Apostle distinguisheth two Israëls, one after the flesh, and the other after the Spirit, so we distinguish two churches; one, which is only so in outward profession before men, possessing the pulpits, the churches, and the schools;

and the other, which is the Church in the sight of God, having a holy doctrine, and a lively faith. These answer precisely to the Apostle's *Israel after the flesh, and Israel after the Spirit*. As the Apostle applies the promises of God, and their accomplishment, not to Israel after the flesh, but to the Israelites after the Spirit, so we also apply the promises which God has made to his Church, not to those who occupy the pulpits, the churches, and the schools, but to them who believe and practise the pure doctrine of the Gospel. As St. Paul defines the true people of God to be those whom God, by his electing love, hath taken from among men, so we define the true Church by the same electing grace, maintaining that the Lord has made all the excellent promises, with which Scripture abounds, to his elect only; and that his elect are such as he has chosen according to his good pleasure, without any regard to particular places, conditions, or qualifications among men.

XVII.

REMARK THE DIFFERENCES OF WORDS AND ACTIONS ON DIFFERENT OCCASIONS.

When a weak scrupulosity or a tenderness of conscience was in question, which put some of the faithful upon eating only herbs, St. Paul exhorted the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak; "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him." Rom. xiv. 3. But when the same St. Paul speaks of false teachers, who wanted to impose a yoke on conscience, and who, under pretext of meats and days, were attempting to join Moses with Jesus Christ, as if Christians were yet obliged to observe the ceremonial law; then the Apostle has no patience with them, but condemns and anathematizes them, as people who preached another Gospel, and exhorts the faithful to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Gal. v. 1.

So again, when you find in the Gospel that Jesus Christ sometimes forbad his Disciples to publish the miracles that he wrought, and to declare his divinity, and, at other times, that he ordered them to publish upon the *house-tops* what they had *heard in private*, and to preach to *all nations* the mysteries of his kingdom, you must remark, that this difference is

owing to different occasions. While Jesus Christ was upon earth, the mysteries of his kingdom were covered with the veil of his humiliation, it being necessary in some sense to conceal them; but after his exaltation, it became proper to publish them to the whole earth.

The same diversity may be remarked in what the Lord Jesus said to the Canaanitish woman—that he was “only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;” and that it was “not meet to give the children’s bread to dogs.” This seems contrary to an almost infinite number of passages of Scripture, which affirm, Jesus Christ is “the light of the Gentiles;” “to him shall the gathering of the people be.” These, and all other such passages, will perfectly agree, if you distinguish time and occasion. While Jesus Christ was upon earth, he was “the minister of the circumcision,” as St. Paul speaks; that is, his personal ministerial commission was only to the Jews: but when he was exalted to glory, his ministry extended over the whole earth.

XVIII.

CONTRAST WORDS AND ACTIONS.

Thus you may oppose the agonies and terrors which seized Jesus Christ at the approach of death, against the constancy and joy of the martyrs, who flew to martyrdom as to a victory. This contrariety of emotions is accounted for by the difference of the persons. Jesus Christ was the Mediator of men towards God, bearing their sins, and engaging with the eternal justice of his Father: but the martyrs were believers, reconciled to God, fighting under Christ’s banner, and, as mystical soldiers, maintaining his righteous claims. One was filled with a sense of God’s wrath against men: the others were filled with a sense of his love. Christ met death as an armed enemy, and as one who, till that time, had a right to triumph over mankind: but martyrs approached him as a vanquished enemy, or rather as an enemy reconciled, who, having changed his nature, was become favourable to men. In one word, Jesus Christ was at war with death; whereas death was at peace and in friendship with the martyrs.

In general, we may affirm, that contrast is one of the most beautiful topics of Christian rhetoric, and that which furnishes

the most striking illustrations. Great care, however, must be taken that the oppositions be natural, easy to comprehend, and properly placed in a full clear light.

XIX.

EXAMINE THE GROUNDS, OR CAUSES OF AN ACTION OR AN EXPRESSION; AND SHEW THE TRUTH OR EQUITY OF IT.

For example, When the *incarnation* of Jesus Christ is in question, as in this text, "The Word was made flesh," you may recur to the foundations of this truth, as revealed in Scripture, in order to shew that a divine Person did take upon him real true humanity, in opposition to the notions of some ancient heretics, who imagined that the human nature of Christ was only apparent. For this purpose you must look into the ancient prophecies for such passages as attribute two natures, the human and divine, to the one person of the Messiah. To the same purpose you may also apply New Testament texts, which speak of the same subject; and you may farther observe such reasons of this singular economy as theology furnisheth, and which are taken from the design of our salvation.

In like manner, when you treat of the *resurrection* of Christ, or his *ascension* to heaven, you must take this topic, and shew the fidelity and credibility of the testimony borne by his Apostles. Your argument may be established by observing what followed his resurrection and ascension; as the effusion of the Spirit, the abolition of the empire of the devil and his idols, the conversion of whole nations to the worship of the one true God, miracles, prophecies, &c.

The same method is proper when some *predictions* are your subjects; as the destruction of Jerusalem, and the rejection of the Jews: for you may either narrate history to shew the *execution*, or you may reason upon the subject to shew how wonderful the divine *wisdom* was in that dispensation: the whole will evince the truth of the predictions.

I said also, the grounds and causes of an action or expression might be examined, to *shew the equity and truth* of either. This principally takes place when any thing surprising and uncommon is in question, for such things at first seem to shock the minds of auditors; or when you are pressing home an exhortation to the practice of any duty which cannot be

performed without difficulty. For example: The Pharisees complain in the Gospel, that the Disciples of Christ did *not keep the traditions of the elders*. In order to justify the Disciples, shew the foundations of Christian liberty; and remark, that the true worship of God does not consist in the observation of external ceremonies, much less in the observation of human traditions and customs; but it consists of true piety, real inward holiness, and actual obedience to the commandments of God.

So again, when Jesus Christ, after he had healed the paralytic man, commanded him to *sin no more, lest a worse thing should come unto him*. You must go to the grounds of the expression to shew its equity. Now these are, that some sins had drawn the wrath of God upon him before—that, if he continued in them, that wrath would certainly return—that the favours which we receive from God engage us to glorify him by good works, &c. This topic is of great use in explaining the commandments of the law, the equity of which must be made to appear; for it must be proved that they are all founded in nature, and have an inviolable fitness in the order of things.

In short, it is proper to take this method, with all exhortations to piety, charity, &c. which are found in Scripture. In order to persuade people to the practice of them, their fitness must be shewed, by opening the grounds, reasons, and principles of our obligations to the practice of all these virtues.

XX.

REMARK THE GOOD AND BAD IN EXPRESSIONS AND ACTIONS.

This topic is of very great use in explaining the histories recorded in the Gospel, where you will frequently find actions and words which may be called *mixed*; because, in general, they proceed from some good principles, and, in particular, they have a good deal of weakness and infirmity in them. If you would explain Matt. xvi. 22, “Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee;” you may observe what there is good, and what bad, in this expression of St. Peter. 1. You see herein his *love* to his Master; for his not being able to bear the discourse of Jesus Christ concerning his sufferings at Jerusalem could only proceed from his ardent affection to him.

2. Herein appears not that cold and lukewarm regard which most men have for one another, but a most *lively* affection, interesting him for his Master; an affection full of tenderness, which could not even bear to hear a word, or entertain a thought, about the death of Jesus Christ. 3. You may observe an *honest freedom*, which put him upon freely addressing Jesus Christ himself, using that familiar access which his condescension allowed his disciples, without a mixture of mean and despicable timidity. 4. You see, in fine, a strong *faith* in his Master's power, as by addressing him he seems persuaded that it depended only on himself to suffer or not to suffer; "Lord, be it far from thee; this shall not be unto thee." Now all these are *good* dispositions. Here follow the *bad* ones. 1. Peter discovers gross *ignorance* of the ways of divine wisdom in sending Jesus Christ into the world; for he does not seem yet to know that Jesus Christ must needs suffer: and with this ignorance the Lord reproaches him in the next verse, "Thou savourest not the things which are of God, but those which are of men." 2. His love to his Master had something merely human and *carnal* in it, since he only considered the preservation of his temporal life, and concerned himself only about his body, instead of elevating his mind to that superior glory of Jesus Christ, which was to follow his sufferings, or considering the great work of man's salvation, to perform which he came into the world. 3. You may also remark a troublesome and criminal *boldness*. He means to be wiser than Jesus Christ. "Peter took him," says the Evangelist, "and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee." Rash attempt! as if Peter were called into the council of God and Jesus Christ his Son, to give his opinion concerning this grand affair. 4. It even seems as if Peter, hearing Christ speak of his sufferings, imagined this discourse proceeded only from his fear of death, and from a mean timidity; for he aims to encourage and comfort him as we do persons whose fears exceed the bounds of reason. "Lord!" says he, "be it far from thee; this shall not be to thee:" as if he had said to him, Do not afflict yourself, your apprehensions of death are groundless, nothing of this is like to happen to you.

XXI.

SUPPOSE THINGS.

This topic is principally used in controversy. For example : When you are speaking of the merit of good works, you may take this way of supposition, and say, Let us suppose that Jesus Christ and his Apostles held the doctrines of the Church of Rome, and that they believed men merited eternal life by their good works : let us suppose that they intended to teach us this doctrine in the Gospels and Epistles. Tell me, I beseech you, if upon this supposition (which is precisely what our adversaries pretend) they ought to have affirmed what they have. Tell me, pray, do you believe yourself well and sufficiently instructed in the doctrine of the merit of good works, when you are told, “ When you have done all these things ye are unprofitable servants ? ” Again, when the example of a miserable Publican is proposed to you, who prays, “ God be merciful to me a sinner ! ” who smites his breast, and dares not lift his eyes to heaven ; when he is placed in opposition to a Pharisee glorying in his works : and when you are informed, the first “ went down to his house justified rather than the other ”—when you are told, “ if it be by grace, it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace ; if it be by works, it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work ”—when you are told, “ you are saved by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God ”—when you are assured, you are “ justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, not of works, lest any man should boast ”—when you hear, that “ to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness ”—when you are taught to believe “ the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life ”—tell me, I once more entreat you, can you persuade yourself that Jesus Christ and his Apostles, by all *these* means, intended to teach you, that man acquires justification, and a right to eternal life, by the merit of his works ?

You may also make such suppositions in morality as well as in controversy, in order to give greater weight to your exhortations.

XXII.

GUARD AGAINST OBJECTIONS.

There are very few texts of Scripture where this topic may not be made use of; and it is needless to mention examples, they will occur to every one without much reflection.

Remark, however, objections must be natural and popular, not far fetched, nor too philosophical; in a word, they must be such as it is absolutely necessary to observe and refute.

They must be proposed in a clear and simple style, without rhetorical exaggerations: yet not unadorned nor unaffecting.

I think it is never advisable to state objections, and defer the answers to them till another opportunity; answer them directly, forcibly, and fully.

Here it may be asked, whether, in stating objections to be answered, it be proper to propose them altogether at once, and then come to the answers; or whether they should be proposed and answered one by one? I suppose discretional good sense must serve for both guide and law upon this subject. If three or four objections regard only *one* part of the text, if each may be proposed and answered in a few words, it would not be amiss to propose these objections all together, distinguishing them, however, by first—second—third;—this may be done agreeably: but if these objections regard *different* parts of the text, or different matters, if they require to be proposed at full length, and if it would also take some time to answer them, it would be impertinence to propose them all together: in such a case they must be proposed and answered apart.

XXIII.

CONSIDER CHARACTERS OF—MAJESTY—MEANNESS—INFIRMITY—NECESSITY—UTILITY—EVIDENCE, &c.

MAJESTY AND MAGNANIMITY.

Take an example of this from John xiv. 1; “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me.” These words are characterized by a *majesty*, which exalts Jesus Christ above all ordinary pastors, and above all the prophets; for who beside the Son of God could say, “Ye believe in God,

believe also in me?" These words equal Jesus Christ to the eternal Father, and make him the object of our faith and confidence as well as the Father; for they imply that faithful souls may repose an entire confidence in his power, protection, and government, and that the shadow of his wings will dissipate the sorrows of their minds, and leave no more room for fear.

You see also a character of *tenderness* and infinite love towards his disciples, which appears in the assurance with which he inspires them, and in the promise which he tacitly makes them, of always powerfully supporting, and never forsaking them. The same characters, or others like them, may be observed in all this discourse of our Saviour, which goes on to the end of the sixteenth chapter: as in these words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life;"—in these, "He that hath seen me, Philip, hath seen the Father;"—in these, "Whatever ye ask in my name, I will do it;"—and again, in these, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." In general, we see almost in every verse, majesty, tenderness, love of holiness, confidence of victory, and other such characters, which it is important to remark.

MEANNESS AND INFIRMITY.

You will very often observe characters of *meanness* and *infirmity* in the words and actions of the disciples of Jesus Christ: as when they asked him, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Acts i. 6. You see, even after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they were full of that *low* and carnal idea which they had entertained of a temporal Messiah.

You also see a *rash curiosity* in their desiring to know the times and seasons of those great events which God thought fit to conceal.

Observe, again, Peter's vision. A great sheet was let down from heaven, and filled with all sorts of animals; a voice said to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat;" to which he answered, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common and unclean." You see in this answer an *over-scrupulous* conscience, all embarrassed with legal ceremonies; and a very defective imperfect knowledge of Gospel liberty.

There is almost an infinite number of texts in the New

Testament where such infirmities appear; and you must not fail to remark them, in order to prove—1. That grace is compatible with much human weakness;—2. That heavenly light arises by degrees upon the mind, and that it is with the new man as with the natural man, who is born an infant, lisps in his childhood, and arrives at perfection insensibly and by little and little;—3. That the strongest and farthest advanced Christians ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, since God himself does not “break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” This he was pleased to exemplify in the most ample manner, in the person of Jesus Christ, when he was upon earth.

NECESSITY.

In regard to *necessity*, you may very often remark this in explaining the doctrines of religion; as when you speak of the mission of Jesus Christ into the world—of his familiar conversation with men—of his death—resurrection—and ascension to heaven, &c.; for you may not only consider the *truth*, but also the *necessity* of each; and by this mean open a most beautiful field of theological argument and elucidation.

The same may be affirmed of sending the Comforter, that is, the Holy Ghost, into the world; in explaining these words, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter,” John xiv. 16. You may very properly consider the necessity of this *Comforter*; either because without his light and help we can never release ourselves from the bondage of sin and Satan—or because without his assistance all that Jesus Christ has done in the economy of salvation would be entirely useless to us. You may also observe the necessity of his *eternal abode* with us;—because it is not enough to be once converted by his efficacious power; we need his continual presence and efficacy, to carry on and finish the work of sanctification; otherwise we should quickly relapse into our first condition.

UTILITY.

Where a thing does not appear absolutely necessary, you may remark its *utility*; as, in some particular miracles of Jesus Christ—in some peculiar afflictions of the faithful—in the manner in which St. Paul was converted—and in an infinite number of subjects which present themselves to a preacher to be discussed.

EVIDENCE.

Evidence must be particularly pressed in articles which are disputed, or which are likely to be controverted. For example : Were you to treat of the second commandment, in opposition to the custom and practice of worshipping images in the Church of Rome, you should press the *evidence* of the words. As, 1. It has pleased God to place this command not in some obscure part of revelation, but in the *moral law* ; in that law, every word of which he caused to proceed from the midst of the flames. 2. He uses not only the term *image*, but *likeness*, and specifies even the likenesses of *all* the things in the world, of those which are “ in heaven above,” of those which are “ in the earth beneath,” and of those which are “ under the the earth.” 3. In order to prevent all the frivolous objections of the human mind, he goes yet farther, not only forbidding the *worshipping* of them, but also the making *use* of them in any manner of way ; and, which is more, he even forbids the *making* of them : “ Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them. Thou shalt not serve them. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,” &c. 4. Add to all this, that the Lord subjoined the highest *interests* to enforce it. He interested herein his majesty, his covenant, and his infinite power ; “ for,” says he, “ I am Jehovah thy God.” He goes farther, and interests his jealousy, that is, that inexorable justice, which avenges affronts offered to his love. Yea, in order to touch us still more sensibly, he even goes so far as to interest our children, threatening us with that terrible wrath, which does not end with the parents, but passes down to their posterity. What could the Lord say more plainly and evidently, to shew that he would suffer no image in his religious worship ? After all this, is it not the most criminal presumption to undertake to distinguish, in order to elude, the force of this commandment ?

You may, if you choose, over and above all this, add Moses’s explication of this command in the fourth of Deuteronomy.

You may also use the same character of *evidence* when you explain several passages which adversaries abuse ; as these words, “ This is my body, which is broken for you ;” and these in the sixth of John, “ Eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood ;” and those passages also in St. James, which speak of justification by works : for in treating these passages

in opposition to the false senses which the Church of Rome gives of them, you must assemble many circumstances, and place each in its proper light, so that all together they may diffuse a great brightness upon the text, and clearly shew its true sense.

XXIV.

REMARK DEGREES.

For example, Gal. i. "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." After you have remarked the extreme force and significancy of the words, observe that the Apostle denounced an anathema *twice*, even denouncing it against *himself*, should he ever be guilty of what he condemns, denouncing it even against an *angel* from heaven in the same case.

You must observe, the Apostle does not always use the same vehemence when he speaks against error. In the fourteenth of the Epistle to the Romans, he contents himself with calling those "weak in the faith" who would eat only herbs, and exhorts the other believers to bear with them. In the third chapter of the first to the Corinthians, he protests to those who build with wood, hay, and stubble, upon Christ the foundation, that their *work* should be burnt, but that *they* should be saved, though it should be as *by fire*. In the seventeenth of Acts, we are told, "his spirit was stirred" when he saw the idolatry and superstition of the Athenians. Elsewhere he says, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." In all these there is a force; but nothing like what appears in these reiterated words, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel to you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Why so? because the Apostle speaks here of an *essential* corruption of the Gospel, which the false Apostles aimed at in the Churches of Galatia; they were annihilating the grace of Christ by associating it with the Mosaic economy; they aimed at the entire ruin of the Church by debasing the purity of the Gospel. In this case, the conscience of this good man could contain no longer; he

stretched his zeal and vehemence as far as possible; he became inexorable, and pronounced anathemas; nothing prevented him, neither the authority of the greatest men, no, nor yet the dignity of the glorious angels: "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed."

XXV.

OBSERVE DIFFERENT INTERESTS.

Thus, if you are explaining the miracle which Jesus Christ wrought in the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, when he healed the withered hand in the presence of the Herodians and Pharisees, you may remark the different *interests* of the spectators in that act of our Lord Jesus; for, on the one hand, *Moses* and his religion seemed interested therein two ways: 1. This miracle was done on a *day* in which *Moses* had commanded them to do no manner of work. And, 2. This was done in a *synagogue* consecrated to the Mosaic worship, so that it was in a manner insulting *Moses* in his own house. Farther, the *Herodians*, who were particularly attached to the person of Herod, either for political reasons, or for some others unknown, were obliged to be offended; for this miracle had a tendency to prove Christ's Messiahship, and thereby (as was commonly thought) his right to the kingdom of Israel; and, consequently, this must blacken the memory of Herod, who endeavoured to kill him in his infancy. The *Pharisees* were no less interested; for they considered Christ as their reprover and enemy, and could not help being very much troubled whenever they saw Jesus Christ work a miracle. Observe the interest of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; his concern was to do good, wherever he had an opportunity, and to glorify God his Father, by confirming the word of his Gospel by acts of infinite power. The *poor afflicted man* had a double interest in it—the healing of his body, and the improvement of his mind.

Thus this action of Jesus Christ, having divers relations, becomes, as it were, a point, whence many lines may be drawn, one on this side, another on that; and hence arise the different remarks which may be made upon it.

XXVI.

DISTINGUISH—DEFINE—DIVIDE

To speak properly, we *distinguish* when we consider a thing in different views. As for example, Faith is considerable, either objectively or subjectively. In the view of its *object*, faith is the work of Jesus Christ; his word and cross produce it; for take away the death of Jesus Christ, and there is no more faith. His resurrection also is the cause of it; "If Jesus Christ be not risen, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins." But if you consider faith in regard to its *subject*, or, to speak more properly, in regard to its efficient cause producing it in the subject, it is the work of the Holy Ghost. So again (to use the same example) faith may be considered with a view to justification, or with a view to sanctification. In the first view, it is opposed to works; in the second, it is the principle and cause of good works; it contains them in summary and abridgment.

Thus man may be considered with a view to *civil* society; so he is obliged to such and such duties, and partakes of such and such advantages: or he may be considered with regard to *church fellowship*; and so he is subject to other laws, and enjoys other privileges. This custom of distinguishing into different views is very common in preaching.

DEFINITION.

This is sometimes used when an act of God is spoken of, as the pardon of our sins—the justification of our persons, &c.—or when a virtue or a vice is in question; for then it may not be improper to define.

DIVISION.

This either regards different species of the genus, or different parts of a whole; and it may sometimes be used profitably. Thus, in speaking of God's providence in general, you may consider the extent of that providence; to which are subject, 1. Natural causes. 2. Contingent. 3. Independent. 4. Good and bad. 5. Great and small.

XXVII.

COMPARE THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE TEXTS TOGETHER.

This is a very useful topic; and it will often furnish very beautiful considerations, if we know how to make a proper use of it. For example, in this text of St. Paul to the Romans, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." You may make a very edifying comparison between this last part, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," with the first part, "There is no condemnation;" and you may remark, that, in the one, the Apostle expresses what God does in favour of the faithful, and, in the other, what the faithful do for the glory of God. God absolves them; and they live holily, and devote themselves to good works. God imposes holiness upon us in justification; and justification is the parent of holiness: take away justification, and there cannot possibly be any good works; take away good works, and there is no more justification.

You may also compare this last part with the condition in which the believer is here considered; he is "in Christ Jesus;" and remark that these two things perfectly agree together, because Jesus Christ is the true cause of our justification; and sanctification is the principal effect of our communion with Jesus Christ.

So again, in this beautiful passage in the second of Ephesians; "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: by grace are ye saved." You may oppose and compare these two subjects in the text, "dead in sin," and "rich in mercy," as being two extremes, extreme misery and extreme mercy, one in us, and the other in God. The greatness of our crimes manifests the riches of God's mercy; and the riches of his mercy absorb the greatness of our crimes. Had our sins been less, it must indeed have been mercy to pardon our sins, but not *riches* of mercy. If God had been only lightly inclined to mercy, he might indeed have pardoned smaller sins, but this would never have *extended*

to persons *dead* in their sins; this belongs only to extraordinary and abounding mercy^h.

CHAPTER VII.

OF TEXTS TO BE DISCUSSED IN A WAY OF CONTINUED APPLICATION.^a

WE have said there are two general ways of discussing a text, that of explication, and that of observation. These two ways of preaching we call *textuary*, because, in effect, they keep to the text without digression, they regard it as the subject matter of the whole discussion; or, if you please, as the field, which they have to cultivate, or to reap: but, beside these, there is a third way, which is, without explaining or making observations, the making of a *continual application* of it, and the reducing of it immediately to practice.

In this manner we must principally manage texts exhorting to holiness and repentance, as this of Zephaniah, "Examine yourselves diligently, O nation not desirable;" for instead of explaining the terms, or making observations on the necessity of the exhortation—the prophet who spoke it—the Jews to whom it is addressed—the description of the nation *not desirable*—the mercy of God in calling these sinners to repentance, &c.

^h The Editor has omitted in this place a long discourse upon 1 Thess. iv. 7. which Mr. Claude had subjoined with a view to exemplify the discussion of a text by way of observations. But it was not altogether calculated to answer the end proposed, because it exemplified very few of the preceding topics, and those without any attention to their order, or any intimation what topics he intended to exemplify. Though, therefore, the discourse contained, as every production of Mr. Claude's must, many striking and useful sentiments, the reader, who seeks information respecting the Composition of a Sermon, has no occasion to regret the omission of it; more especially as the discourse was at least one-third as long as all the twenty-seven topics taken together. To supply this defect, the Editor, who, from Mr. Claude's failure, supposed at first that the object was unattainable, has been induced to attempt it in four sketches upon The Gospel Message. They will be found at the end of this Essay. It should be remembered, however, that these topics are subject both to use and abuse. They are suggested in order to aid invention; but they require judgment and discretion in the use of them. An observation of a learned writer on this subject deserves attention: "Constat scopum et finem hujusce rei, esse promptitudinem quandam, et expeditum usum cognitionis nostræ, potius quam ejusdem amplificationem aut incrementum."—*Bacon de Augment. Scient.* lib. v. c. 3.

^a See on Deut. xxxi. 6. or on Ps. iv. 4, 5. or on Ps. lxi. 32, 33. or on Luke xii. 4, 5.

the whole may very usefully be turned into practice, and we may enter upon that serious self-examination which the prophet commands.

The same may be said of 1 Cor. xi. 28, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup;" for, laying aside all theological observations, you may actually enter upon self-examination.

This manner, well and wisely disposed, by choosing proper occasions, will produce (as I have elsewhere said) an excellent effect: but always remember on this rule, that, in using this method something searching and powerful must be said, or it would be better let alone.

We will exemplify one of the texts, which may be discussed by way of perpetual application. Let us take St. Paul's words to the Philippians, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Begin with a tender exordium, lamenting the condition of mankind, that so few know the truth; for there is almost an infinite number, to whom it is not preached, who are left in the thickest darkness; almost an infinite number, to whom it is preached, who corrupt it with errors and superstitions, and who almost never hear it but with a confused mixture of falsehoods and human inventions; almost an infinite number of such as know it clearly, but yet neglect it, and, by their negligence, preclude the admirable fruits which it ought to produce. Having expressed astonishment that so "few will be saved," and, finally, having shewed the true causes why so few apply to it in the manner they ought, the exordium must be finished by an exhortation to profit by this time of our calling, and not when we go out of the world to have to ask ourselves what we have been doing in it, and to reproach ourselves with having abused the patience and mercy of God. "Let us now work out our salvation with fear and trembling," &c. This exordium must be rendered lively and agreeable, and executed so that it may awaken the hearer, and obtain a particular attention.

This being done, you must observe, that, were you about to treat of these words in the ordinary way, you could not fail to make several reflections on the doctrines; 1. On these terms, "your own salvation," which are very weighty and of great importance;—2. On St. Paul's command, that we should "work it out," on which you would have many things to say;—and, finally, on that "fear and trembling" which must accompany

our labour; for many important questions would also arise from that—but, you may add, that, laying apart all doctrines, which very often serve only for amusement through our levity, your design is to enable your auditors to do what St. Paul commands, and to assist them actually in labouring during this hour devoted to piety, and in “working out their salvation with that fear and trembling” which so great a work demands.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF TEXTS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PROPOSITIONS.

To these three a fourth may be added, which consists in reducing the texts to a number of propositions, two at least, and three or four at most, having mutual dependence and connexion. Thus for example, Rom. viii. 13, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Without pretending to explain the terms, *flesh—spirit—death—life*, or the phrases, “live after the flesh”—“mortify the deeds of the body” (which is the usual method) you may reduce the whole to two *propositions*; the one, that the damnation of sinners is inevitable—and the other, that a good and holy life is both a principal end of the Gospel, and an inseparable character of Christianity. When this method is taken, there is much more liberty than in the former, and a more extensive field opens. In the former methods you are restrained to your *text*, and you can only explain and apply that; you can make no other observations than such as precisely belong to it; but here your subject is the matter contained in your *propositions*, and you may treat of them thoroughly, and extend them as far as you please, provided you do not violate the general rules of a sermon. Here you must propose not to treat of the text, but of those *subjects* which you have chosen from several contained in the text. The way of explication is most proper to give the meaning of Scripture; and this, of systematical divinity. The way of application rather regards practice than theory: but this, which we call the way of propositions, or points, is more proper to produce an acquaintance with systematical divinity, and it will equally serve theory and practice.

For example, let us take the text just now quoted: “If ye

live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." After saying in a few words, that by those who "live after the flesh," the Apostle means the worldly and wicked, such as are governed by worldly interests and carnal passions; and that by the *death*, with which he threatens them, he means eternal damnation; and that, on the contrary, by *life*, he intends that eternal salvation and heavenly glory, which the Gospel promises; and that, by the "mortification of the deeds of the body," of which he speaks, and of which he says the Holy Spirit is the author, he intends a holy life, spent in the exercise of virtues and practice of good works; after briefly saying this, reduce the whole discourse to two propositions. First, The damnation of the wicked is inevitable.—Secondly, The practice of good works, and a holy and religious life, is the principal end proposed in the Gospel, and a principal character of a true Christian.

[The discourse of Mr. Claude's in this place being much longer than was necessary to illustrate the rule of discussion by propositions, the author judges it expedient to give a shorter, which on account of its brevity may answer the purpose better.

John v. 23, "All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

Here, after mentioning the opposition which many have made to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and the vast importance of being well established in it, you may undertake to establish it from these words; and to shew,

I. That the Son is in every respect to be honoured as the Father.

II. That every one who refuses this honour to the Son, does by that very act withhold it from the Father also.

In establishing the first proposition you proceed to mark the grounds on which it stands;

1. That he is altogether entitled to it—

(There is no ground on which the Father is entitled to honour, but the same is found in Christ also; seeing that he has equally the names and attributes of Deity ascribed to him; and his works equally bear witness to him.)

2. That he actually claims it—

(The words of the text are so strong, that no mere creature could use them without blasphemy: and we cannot account for Christ's using them on any other hypothesis, than that he was God equal with the Father. And his command to us to exercise faith in him precisely as we do in the Father (John xiv. 1.) is a clear and strong confirmation of it.)

3. That it is paid to him both in heaven and earth—

(Stephen, when he saw the Father and Jesus standing at his right hand, worshipped Jesus exactly in the way that Jesus in his dying hour had worshipped the Father. And Paul repeatedly prayed to Jesus to take away from him the thorn in the flesh; which prayer Jesus answered, saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee." In heaven too all the glorified saints and angels adore him exactly as they adore the Father. Can we doubt then whether this honour be due to him?)

To prove the second proposition, you may shew, that a refusal of honour to Christ is a withholding of it from the Father;

1. Because the Father and Christ are one—

(This the Lord has repeatedly affirmed: John x. 30. and xiv. 7—9. and the whole Scripture attests it; John i. 1, 14. Col. i. 19. and ii. 9. Heb. i. 3. Rom. ix. 5. so that a denial or acknowledgment of Christ necessarily involves in it a similar treatment of the Father, 1 John ii. 22, 23.)

2. Because the Father has absolutely required it at our hands—

(God has commanded it, Jer. xxiii. 6. Isai. xlv. 23, 24. and if we withhold it from Christ, the Father will resent it as an indignity offered to himself. Deut. xviii. 18.)

3. Because in withholding honour from Christ we defeat, as far as in us lies, the eternal counsels of the Father—

(From eternity did the Father determine to reconcile the world unto himself in and by Christ: and his whole honour and authority were vested in Christ on purpose that he might be glorified in his Son. Phil. ii. 9—11. John xiv. 13.

But this whole plan is defeated, when we refuse to acknowledge God in Christ, or withhold from him any portion of that honour which is due to his name.]

It must not be thought that these *four* ways of discussing texts are so heterogeneous that they can never be mixed together; on the contrary, there are a great many texts in which it will be necessary to make use of two, or three, and sometimes even of all the four ways. When a text is *explained*, it will be very often needful to make some *observations* also, and the matter will require as long an *application*. Sometimes, to explain a text well, the matter must be reduced into many *propositions*, as we have observed on these words, "It is God that worketh in you to will and do of his good pleasure." In like manner, when the method of *observation* is used, it very often happens that some part of the text needs *explaining*, and so of the rest. These four ways must be distinguished, for two reasons: 1st. Because they are very different from one another; to explain, to make observations, to apply, and to reduce to propositions, are four very different ways of treating texts. A composer, then, must not confound them together; but he must observe the difference well, that he may use them properly. 2d. Because it is customary to give the discussion of a text the name of the *prevailing* manner of handling it. We call that the way of explication, in which there is more explication than observation. We not only call that the way of observation which has only observations, but that in which there is more observation than explication, or application; and so of the rest.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE EXORDIUM.

THE Exordium is that part, in which the minds of the hearers are *prepared*, and a natural and easy way opened to the discussion.

But, first, a question presents itself (on which opinions are much divided) whether exordiums be necessary? or even whether they be not in all cases quite useless, and in some hurtful? Whether it would not be better entirely to omit them, to begin immediately with the connexion of the text with the preceding verses, pass to the division, and so enter on the discussion? There are many of this opinion, and their reasons are,

1st. That there appears too much *artifice* in an exordium, which is more likely to dissipate, than to conciliate, the attention of your hearers. "It is evident (say they) to the auditors, that you design to come insensibly, and by a kind of artful manœuvre, to your matter, and to lead your hearers almost imperceptibly to it; but this seems a finesse altogether unworthy of the Gospel, and contrary to that sincerity, ingenuousness, gravity, and simplicity, which should reign in the pulpit. Indeed, when a wise hearer perceives you design to deceive him, he conceives a strong prejudice against you, and that prejudice will certainly be hurtful in the following part of the discourse."

They add, in the *second* place, that "exordiums are *extremely difficult to compose*, and justly styled the *crosses of preachers*. Should some small advantage be gained by exordiums, it would not be of consequence enough to induce us to compose them. In so doing we should waste a part of our time and strength, which might be much more usefully employed."

They say, *thirdly*, that "the principal end proposed in an exordium is, either to conciliate the hearer's affection, or to excite his attention, or to prepare the way to the matters to be treated of: but all these are to be *supposed*. As to their affection, pastors, who preach to their own flocks, ought not to doubt that. We speak to Christians, to persons who consider us as the ministers of Jesus Christ, whom, consequently, they respect and love. As to attention, it ought also to be supposed; not only because pulpit-subjects are divine and salutary to men, but also because such only come to public worship as desire to hear the word of God attentively; and, indeed, if the auditors have not that disposition of themselves, an exordium cannot give it them. Such a disposition is an effect of a man's faith and piety; and it is not to be thought, that an exordium of eight or ten periods can convert the worldly and profane, or give faith and piety to those who have them not. As to what regards the introducing of the matter to be treated of, the bare reading of the text sufficiently does that; for, according to the common way of preaching, the text contains the subject to be discussed."

Finally, they add, "delivering an exordium is only *mispending time*, uselessly dissipating a part of the hearers' attention, so that afterward they frequently sleep very quietly when

you enter on the discussion. Would it not be better, then, immediately to engage them in the matter, so that their attachment may afterward serve to maintain their attention, according to the natural inclination which all men have to finish what they have once begun?"

But none of these reasons are weighty enough to persuade us to reject exordiums, or to be careless about them. As to the first; The art which appears in an exordium, so far from being odious in itself, and seeming unnatural to the hearers, is, on the contrary, altogether natural. It is disagreeable to enter abruptly into theological matters without any preparation. It would not be necessary, were our minds all exercised about divine things: but as, alas! we are in general too little versed in such exercises, it is good to be conducted to them without violence, and to have emotions excited in us in a soft and insensible manner. It is not finesse and deceit, since in doing it we only accommodate ourselves to the weakness of man's mind, and indeed, it is what he himself desires. Moreover, it is to be observed, that hearers are now so habituated to an exordium, that if they heard a preacher enter abruptly into his matter, they would be extremely disgusted, and would imagine the man was aiming to do with them what the angel did with Habakkuk, when he took him by the hair of his head, and transported him in an instant from Judæa to Babylon. Some time, then, ought to be employed gently to lead the mind of the hearer to the subjects of which you are going to treat. You are not to suppose that he already understands them, nor that he is thinking on what you have been meditating, nor that he can apply himself to it incessantly without preparation.

The second reason may have some weight with weak and lazy preachers; but it has none with wise and diligent students: and, after all, exordiums are not so difficult as to be impracticable: a little pains-taking is sufficient, as we every day experience.

The third is not more considerable. I grant, preachers ought to suppose the love and affection of their hearers; yet it does not follow, that they ought not to excite it, when they preach to them. Perhaps their affection is not always in exercise; it may be sometimes suspended and even opposed by contrary sentiments, by coolness and indifference, by hatred or envy, arising from the defects of the pastor (for, however able,

he is not perfect) or from the depravity of the hearers. The same may be said of attention, although they ought to have it entirely for the divine truths which the preacher speaks; yet, it is certain, they have it not: and all that a preacher can desire is, that his hearers have a general disposition to hear the Gospel. The preacher must endeavour to give them a peculiar attention to such matters as he has to discuss. As to the rest, it must not be thought that the bare reading of the text, or the connexion, or the division only, can produce that effect: a greater compass must be taken, to move the human mind, and apply the subject. And this also may be said of preparation, for which an exordium is principally designed. The reading of the text may do something; connexion and division may contribute more; but all this, without an exordium, will be useless.

Nor is it difficult to answer the fourth reason; for, beside the advantages of an exordium, which are great enough to prevent our calling it lost time, its parts are ordinarily so short, that they cannot justly be accused of dissipating or fatiguing the hearers' minds. To which I add, that the exordium itself, if well chosen, will always contain agreeable and instructive matter, so that, considered in itself, something good is always to be learned from it.

We cannot approve, then, of the custom of those preachers, who enter immediately into the literal explication of the text, and make it serve for an exordium; after which they divide their discourses into several parts, which they discuss as they go on. Surely the hearer is not suddenly able to comprehend their explications, having yet neither emotions nor preparation. Methinks it would be much better gently to stir them up, and move them by something which gives them no pain, than to load them all on a sudden with an explication, which they can neither clearly comprehend, nor perhaps distinctly hear.

Least of all do we approve of the custom of some other preachers, who, intending to explain the text, or to make some reflections throughout the whole sermon, enter immediately into the matter without any exordiums at all. I am persuaded they are induced to do thus only for the sake of avoiding the difficulty of composing an exordium, that is, in one word, only for the sake of indulging their idleness and negligence.

Taking it for granted, then, that an exordium must be used,

it may be asked, what are the principal benefits we expect to receive from them? and with what general views ought they to be composed? In answer, we say, the principal design of an exordium is, to attract or excite the *affections* of the audience—to stir up their *attention*—and to *prepare* them for the particular matters of which we are about to treat.

The two first of these must only be proposed *indirectly*. A preacher would render himself ridiculous, if in ordinary discourses, and without cases of extreme necessity, he should *labour* by this mean to acquire the esteem and affection of his congregation. This method would be more likely to make them rather despise than esteem him.

You must not, then, compliment the people, nor praise yourself, nor indeed speak of yourself in any manner of way. These are affectations which never succeed; and yet some able preachers slip into this weakness, especially when they preach to strange congregations, and, above all, when they address assemblies of the rich, the learned, or the noble.

Then they never fail to interlard their exordiums with some common-place saws—either the pleasure it gives them to be called to that pulpit—or an affectation of self-contempt—a confession of their great weakness—or something of this kind. To speak my opinion freely, I think these are pedantic airs, which have a very bad effect. Sensible auditors do not like to hear such fantastical pretences, which are both contrary to the gravity of the pulpit, and to the decency of a modest man.

How then, you will ask, must the *affections* of the hearers be attracted? I answer, *indirectly*, by an exordium well chosen, and well spoken: and this is the surest way of succeeding.

In regard to *attention*, it is certain it ought to be awakened and fixed in the same manner, that is, by something agreeable and worthy of being heard, a composition of piety and good sense. I do not disapprove of asking sometimes for attention, either on account of the importance of the matter, the solemnity of the day, the state of the Church, or, in short, of any other particular occasion; but it must not be done often; for then it would never be minded; and, when it is done, the fewer words the better.

The *principal use* of an exordium is, to *prepare* the hearer's mind for the particular matters you have to treat of, and insensibly to conduct him to it. If this end be not obtained,

the exordium cannot but be impertinent; and, on the contrary, if this end be answered, the exordium cannot be improper.

When I say the hearer's mind must be prepared for and conducted to the matter, I mean to say, these are two different things. You *prepare* the hearer for the matter, when you stir up in him such *dispositions* as he ought to have, to hear well, and to profit much. You insensibly *conduct* your hearer to the matter, when, by the natural connexion of the subjects of which you speak, you lead him from one thing to another, and enable him to enter into the doctrine of your sermon.

Let us advert a moment to each. The *preparation* must be determined by the subject of which you are going to speak; for if it be a sad and afflicting subject, in which you aim to excite the compassion, the grief, and the tears of your audience, you must begin the exordium by imparting such a disposition.

If you have to treat of a profound and difficult mystery, aim to diffuse elevation and admiration among the hearers. If some terrible example of God's justice be the subject, endeavour to stir up fear. If some enormous crime, prepare the mind for horror, by a meditation on the enormity of human corruption. If you have to treat of repentance, and in an extraordinary manner to interest your hearers in it, you must begin to dispose them to it by general ideas of God's wrath, which we have deserved—of the little fruit we have borne to his glory—or something of a like nature. If, on the contrary, the matter you have to treat of be common and tranquil, aim in your exordium to place the mind in its natural state, and only endeavour to excite honest and Christian tempers, which we all ought always to have. In a word, the exordium must always participate the spirit of the subject that you mean to discuss, in order to dispose your hearers for it. Not to speak in this manner, is to lose all the benefit of an exordium; and to use it to an opposite purpose, would be to renounce common sense, and to act like an idiot.

The second use of an introduction is, to *conduct* the hearer gradually to the subject of which you are about to treat. This (as I have said) depends on the connexion between the subjects of the exordium with themselves, and with the matter of the discussion. I say first with *themselves*; for they must, as it were, hold each other by the hand, and have a mutual dependence and subordination; otherwise the auditor will be surprised to find himself suddenly transported from one topic

to another. I say also with the *discussion*; for the exordium is principally intended to introduce that.

The first quality of an exordium is *brevity*. This, however, has a proper measure; for as it ought not to be excessively long, so neither should it be too short; the middle way is the best. The longest exordium may have ten or twelve periods, and the shortest six or seven, provided the periods be not too long. The reason is, that, on the one hand, proper time may be given the hearer to prepare himself to hear you with attention, and to follow you in the discussion of the matter; and, on the other, that in giving time sufficient for that, you may prevent his wandering out of the subject, wearying himself, and becoming impatient. If the exordium were too short, it would oblige the hearer to enter too soon into the matter, without preparation enough; and excessive length would weary him; for it is with an auditor as with a man who visits a palace, he does not like to stay too long in the court, or first avenues; he would only view them transiently without stopping, and proceed as soon as possible to gratify his principal curiosity.

2. An exordium must be *clear*, and consequently disengaged from all sorts of abstruse and metaphysical thoughts. It should be expressed in natural and popular terms, and not overcharged with matter. Indeed, as the auditors are neither enlivened nor moved yet, you must not expect of them at first a great degree of penetration and elevation, nor even a great attempt towards these, though they may be capable of them when they are animated. You must therefore, in an exordium, avoid all that can give pain to the mind, such as physical questions, long trains of reasoning, and such like. However, do not imagine, that, under pretence of great clearness, an exordium must have only theological matter, or consist rather of words than things. This would be falling into the other extreme. An exordium, then, must contain matter capable of nourishing and satisfying the mind; to do which, it must be clear, easy to comprehend, and expressed in a very natural manner.

3. An exordium must be *cool and grave*^a. Consequently

^a *An exordium must be cool.* Mr. Claude's rule is undoubtedly good in general, and his reason weighty.

This, however, is a rule sometimes dispensed with. Cicero begins an oration thus: — "Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra?"

no grand figures may be admitted, as apostrophes, violent exclamations, reiterated interrogations, nor, in a word, any thing that tends to give vehement emotions to the hearers: for as the discourse must be accommodated to the state of the hearer, he, in the beginning, being cool, and free from agitations, the speaker ought to be so too. No wise man will approve exordiums full of enthusiasms and poetical raptures, full of impetuous or angry emotions, or of bold interrogations, or surprising paradoxes to excite admiration. You must, in the beginning, speak gently, remembering that your auditors are neither yet in heaven, nor in the air, nor at all elevated in their way thither, but upon earth, and in a place of worship.

4. An exordium, however, ought not to be so cool and grave, as not to be at the same time *engaging and agreeable*. There are three principal ends which a preacher should propose, namely, to instruct, to please, and to affect; but, of these three, that which should reign in an exordium is, to please. I own, you should also aim to instruct and affect; but less to instruct than to please, and less still to affect than to instruct. Indeed, if you can judiciously and properly introduce any thing tender into an exordium (especially on extraordinary occasions) you may to good purpose; but, be that as it may, the agreeable should reign in this part. You easily see by this, that you must banish from the exordium all ill-natured censures, terrible threatenings, bitter reproaches, and, in general, all that savours of anger, contempt, hatred, or indifference, and, in short, every thing that has the air of quarrelling with the hearers. Their attention must not only be excited (you may sufficiently do so by censures and reproaches), but you must softly insinuate yourself into their esteem, so that they may not only not oppose what you say, but be well satisfied you are an honest and well-meaning man.

5. *The whole of the exordium must be naturally connected with all the matter of the text.* I say first the *whole* of the *exordium*; for great care must be taken to put nothing there foreign to your subject: therefore the best exordiums are those which are composed of two propositions, the first of which is naturally and immediately connected with the second,

Quamdiu etiam furor iste tuus nos illudet? Quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia?" &c. [Perhaps an exordium somewhat more animated than usual on such occasions, as the Discourses on Jer. ix. 23, 24. and Eph. ii. 4—7.]

and the second naturally and immediately with the text. Each of these propositions may be either proved or amplified; but the last must always conduct you with ease to the subject in question, nor must the first be very distant. According to this maxim, all exordiums must be condemned, which, instead of leading you into the text, make you, as it were, tumble from a precipice into it, which is intolerable. Those also are to be condemned which conduct to the text by many long circuits, that is, by many propositions chained together, which is certainly vicious, and can only fatigue the hearer. I add, in the second place, the exordium must be connected with the *whole* matter of the *text*. It ought not merely to relate to one of its parts (or to one view only, if you intend to consider it in different views) but to all. One of the principal uses of an exordium is to prepare the mind of the hearer for the matter to be discussed. If, therefore, the exordium refer only to one of its parts, or to one view only, it will prepare the mind of the hearer for that one part, for that one view only, and not for the rest.

6. An exordium *must be simple*. We would not entirely banish figures: on the contrary, we would always employ such as may render the discourse pleasant and agreeable: but pompous and magnificent expressions must be avoided, as far as the things spoken will permit. Do not use a style too elevated, bordering on bombast—nor periods too harmonious—nor overstrained allegories—nor even metaphors too common or too bold; for indeed the hearer's mind, yet cool and in its natural state, can bear nothing of this kind.

7. An exordium *must not be common*. As this is a rule much abused, it will be needful to explain it. By a common exordium, I do not mean an exordium which will suit many texts; for if the texts are parallel, and the subject be managed with the same views, and in the same circumstances, what occasion is there to compose different exordiums? By a common exordium, I mean, in the first place, one taken from trivial things, and which have been said over and over again; these the people already know, and your labour will be infallibly thrown away. Such are exordiums taken from comparisons of the sun—of kings—of conquerors—of the ancient Romans, &c.—or from some histories of the Old Testament, which have been often repeated—or of some well-known types, as the Israelites' passage through the Red Sea—and

many more of the same kind. In the second place, I mean, by a common or general exordium, one which may be alike applied to two texts of different matter, or to two contrary interpretations of the same text. It is in this sense that common exordiums are vicious and distasteful.

8. Even in metaphorical or figurative texts it is quite puerile to make an exordium join the text by a metaphor; for, whatever ingenuity there may seem to be in it, it is certain, there is no taste, no judgment discovered in the practice; and, however it may pass in college declamations, it would appear too trifling in the pulpit. The exordium, then, must be connected with the text by the matter itself, that is, not by the figure, but by the *subject* intended to be conveyed by the figure. I would not, however, forbid the joining of the exordium to the text sometimes by the figure, provided it be done in a chaste and prudent manner.

Let us give one example: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." John vi. 54. An exordium to a sermon from this text may be taken from the idea which Holy Scripture teaches us to form of our conversion, as if it were a *NEW birth*, which begins a new life—that, for this purpose, it speaks of a new *man*, a new *heaven*, which illuminates, and a new *earth*, which supports him—that, attributing to this new man the same *senses*, which nature has formed in us, as sight, hearing, feeling, smelling, tasting, it attributes also to him *objects* proportioned to each of these mystical senses, and ascribes to them *effects* like those which our senses produce by their natural operations. It tells us, that our *eyes* contemplate the celestial *light*, which illuminates and guides us in the ways of righteousness—that our *ears* hear the *voice* of God, who calls us, and who, by these means, makes us obey our vocation. It tells us that the Gospel is a *savour* of life, which communicates salvation to us. And, finally, it attributes to us a *mouth*, to eat the *flesh* and drink the *blood* of the Son of God, in order to nourish us to life eternal. It is this last expression which Jesus Christ has made use of in the sixth of John, and which says in my text, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life."

This exordium joins itself to the text by the figure made use of in the text, but in such a manner as not to be chargeable with affectation or witticism; for it is by a serious

reflection on the *Scripture* use of the figure, acknowledging it to be a figure, and *preparing* the hearer to attend to the explication.

To these rules I subjoin a word or two on the *vices* of exordiums. 1. There are some preachers who imagine it a fine thing to take exordiums from the persons of their hearers, or the circumstances of times, places, general affairs, or news of the world: but I believe this is altogether a vicious method, and should never be used but on extraordinary occasions. First, there is too much *affectation* in it. Is it not a vain parade to begin a discourse with things which have no relation to the matter?—It is certainly contrary to the chastity and modesty of a Christian pulpit. Secondly, exordiums of this sort are usually pulled in by head and shoulders. How should it be otherwise, when the articles of which they are composed, have, if any, only a very distant relation to the text? By such means you defeat the principal design of an exordium, which is to prepare the hearers' minds, and to conduct them insensibly to the subject. And, finally, it is very difficult in such exordiums to avoid saying impertinencies; for what, in a public discourse, can be more indelicate, than to speak of yourself, or hearers, or times, or news? In my opinion, such exordiums ought to be entirely rejected.

2. You must also, for the most part, reject exordiums taken from profane history, or what they call the apophthegms of illustrious men. This method savours too much of the college, and is by no means in the taste of pious, well-bred men. Alexander, Cæsar, Pompey, all the great names of antiquity, have no business to ascend the pulpit; and if they are not suffered now-a-days, either in orations in the senate, or in pleas of the bar, much less ought they to be allowed in Christian sermons. It may not be amiss if they appear now and then in the discussion, or in the application; but even there we ought to see them but seldom, not oftener than once a year at most: but to introduce them at the beginning of a sermon is intolerable. I say much the same of citations from profane authors; they must be forborne, unless it be something so particular, so agreeable, and so apt to the text, as to carry its own recommendation along with it. Of this kind, I think, was the exordium of a sermon on this text: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." It was taken from Plutarch, who

relates, that Alcibiades called one day to see Pericles, and was told by his domestics that their master was busy in preparing his accounts to lay before the republic: to which he immediately replied, Instead of labouring to make up his accounts, it would be incomparably better to render himself not accountable to them at all. It was added, that this is the notion of almost all wicked men, who, being ignorant of God their governor, and feeling their consciences charged with a thousand crimes, think only of eluding the judgment of God, and of avoiding that account which they will one day be obliged to give to the Master of all creatures—that if only one man, or two men, were in question, the attempt of Alcibiades might succeed; but as it was God with whom they had to do, it must be worse than foolish to imagine his tribunal could be avoided—that there was no other way to take, than to prepare to give an account to God; nor any advice more reasonable, than to labour continually to do it well—and that, for this purpose, even self-interest should oblige us to have recourse to God to assist us by his grace—this is what the Church aims to teach us in the words of the prophet,—“ So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

In general, the best exordiums are taken from *theology*; for as, on the one hand, they have always more relation to the matter of the text, so, on the other, they much better prepare the hearers' minds, being more grave, and free from the puerile pedantries of the college.

In order to compose an exordium, after you have well considered the senses of the text, and observed what are the principal matters which ought to enter into the discussion, and after you have made the division, endeavour to reduce the whole to one common idea, and then choose some other idea naturally connected with that common idea, either immediately, or by means of another. If it be immediately connected with the subject, endeavour to reduce it to one proposition, which may be cleared and proved as you go on; or if it have parts, which require separate explications and proofs, it must be managed so as to include them; and, finally, by the natural connexion of that proposition with the discussion, enter into the text. If the proposition be connected with the text only remotely, then establish the first, pass on to the second, and so proceed from the second to the text.

Exordiums may be *taken from* almost all the same topics as observations, that is, from *genus, species, contraries, &c.* For there are but few good exordiums which might not go into the discussion, under the title of general observations. Of such observations, that must be chosen for an exordium which is least essential, or least necessary to the discussion, and which, besides, is clear, agreeable, and entertaining. A *comparison* may sometimes be employed in an exordium, but not often; nor must trivial comparisons be used, which all the world know, or which are taken from any thing mean; nor must they be embarrassing, taken from things unknown to the people, as those are which are borrowed from mechanics, astronomy, &c. of which the people know nothing at all.

Bible history may be used, but sparingly; and the application must be always just, agreeable, and, in some sort, new and remarkable.

Types may also be employed, but with the same precautions, always consulting good sense and taste.

The best method is, to compose several *exordiums for the same text*, by turning your imagination divers ways, by taking it in all its different relations; for by such means you may choose the most proper. But after all these general precepts, which indeed ought to be known, and by which exordiums must be regulated, it is certain, *the invention and composition of an exordium can only become easy by practice.* A young preacher ought not to complain of trouble, nor to be any way negligent in the matter; for he may be sure of succeeding by attention and application.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE CONCLUSION.^a

THE conclusion ought to be lively and animating, full of great and beautiful figures, aiming to move Christian affections—as the love of God—hope—zeal—repentance—self-

^a *Conclusion.* This in a sermon answers to what in an oration is called the *peroration*. "It recapitulates, or sums up the strongest and chief arguments, and, by moving the passions, endeavours to persuade the hearers to yield to the force of them."—*Arist. Rhet.*

The fire of the preacher should blaze here; he should collect the ideas of his whole sermon into this part, as rays are collected in the focus of a burning-glass, and inflame the hearts of his auditors.

condemnation—a desire of self-correction—consolation—admiration of eternal benefits—hope of felicity—courage and constancy in afflictions—steadiness in temptations—gratitude to God—recourse to him by prayer—and other such dispositions^b.

There are three sorts of dispositions, or emotions; the violent—the tender—and the elevated. The *violent* are, for example, indignation, fear, zeal, courage, firmness against temptations, repentance, self-loathing, &c.

The *tender* emotions are, joy, consolation, gratitude; tender subjects are, pardon, pity, prayer, &c. The *elevated* are, admiration of the majesty of God, the ways of Providence, the glory of Paradise, the expectation of benefits, &c.

There are some Christian passions which may be excited either by a tender or violent method. Repentance is of this kind; for which extremely tender motives may be employed, as the love and bounty of God, which we have so unworthily treated. Violent motives may also be used, as censure, an enumeration and description of the enormity of the sins reigning amongst us, the horror of our ingratitude, the fear of God's judgments, the justice of his scourges and chastisements, &c.

In like manner, firmness against temptations may be discussed; for tender motives may be used, as—the vanity of the promises and hopes of this world, which are only false and delusive appearances—the consideration of the miserable state of backsliders and apostates—the dignity to which God calls his children—the eternal rewards which attend perseverance—the joy of a good man when he has gained a signal victory over temptations. Violent methods may also be employed, as—inspiring a holy ambition to defeat the designs of the world—a contempt of the plots and powers against us—the hope, or rather the inviolable assurance we

^b *A conclusion should excite Christian dispositions.* If the reader attend to these observations of Mr. Claude, he will see more clearly the use that is to be made of the APPLICATIONS and INFERENCES that are contained in the "Horæ Homileticæ."

Bishop Burnet says, "A sermon, the conclusion whereof makes the auditory look pleased, and sets them all talking with one another, was certainly either not rightly spoken, or not rightly heard; it has been fine, and has probably delighted the congregation rather than edified it: but that sermon that makes every one go away silent, and grave, and hastening to be alone to meditate, and pray the matter over in secret, has had a true effect."—*Past. Care*, chap. ix.

have, that all the powers of earth joined together cannot shake us. St. Paul uses mixed motives at the end of the eighth of Romans: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

A conclusion should be *diversified*. I mean, we should not be content to move one single Christian passion; many must be touched, and a proper length of discourse assigned to each, in order to stir up the passion. Too long time, however, must not be spent; but when the effect is evidently produced, pass to another passion. As the conclusion ought to be composed at least of four or five^c reflections (naturally arising from the text, either general, from the whole text, or particular, from some of the parts into which it is divided;) so, if possible, these reflections must be placed in prudent order, so that the weakest and least powerful may be the first, and the strongest last; and so that the discourse may become more rapid as it runs.

I think, however, it would be vicious to finish with motives too violent, as subjects tending to horror—indignation—or heavy censure. It would be much better, in general, to close with a tender, or even with an elevating motive. Different motives may be (and indeed they ought to be) mixed in the same conclusion, that is, violent, tender, and elevated, in order to stir up many passions of different kinds.

Conclusion sometimes delights in examples, similitudes, short and weighty sentences, the inventions of a fine imagination, and, in one word, it need not be either so chaste or so regular as the body of the sermon, where more accuracy must be observed. There is no danger when a preacher, in a conclusion, gives himself up to the fire of his genius, provided he say nothing extravagant or capricious, nothing that savours of enthusiasm or declamation.

^c Perhaps two or three would be preferable.

DISCUSSION BY EXPLICATION.

MCCCCLXII.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.

Mark xvi. 15, 16. *He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

MANY are prejudiced against the fundamental doctrines of Christianity—

Hence, while its authority is maintained, its mysteries are suppressed—

But the declaration before us is of infinite importance,

I. Explain its import.

The meaning of the terms being fixed, the whole will be clear—

Salvation comprehends the everlasting happiness of the soul.

[It cannot be limited to any temporal deliverance—

Believers have been often subjected to persecutions and cruel deaths—

Nor was the deliverance of the saints in Jerusalem a matter of universal concern—

Its import is properly expressed by St. Paul^a—]

This is to be obtained by “believing” in Christ.

[The faith here spoken of is not a mere assent to the Gospel—

The devils themselves assent to truths at which they tremble^b—

To believe aright, is to receive Christ in all his offices^c—

And such faith has the promise of eternal life^d—

Not that it is more meritorious than other graces; but it unites the soul to Christ—]

Damnation, on the contrary, imports everlasting misery.

^a 2 Tim. ii. 10.

^c John i. 12. 1 Cor. i. 3.

^b Acts viii. 13, 23. Jam. ii. 19.

^d John iii. 14—16, 18, 36.

[The punishment of the wicked is elsewhere said to be eternal^e—

And the contrast in the text fully expresses its duration —
Our Lord himself puts this point beyond a doubt^f—]

This will be our portion if we “believe not” in Christ.

[It is not reserved only for avowed infidels and scoffers—

They are in unbelief, who are destitute of saving faith—

And therefore must want that salvation that is annexed to faith^g—]

To faith, baptism, when practicable, must be added.

[The believer must openly profess his allegiance to Christ—

But no observance of outward ordinances will profit an unbeliever^h—]

The objections ignorantly urged against this Gospel lead us to,

II. Vindicate its reasonableness.

To ascribe salvation to good works, and damnation to evil works, would be thought reasonable enough—

But to connect the former with faith, and the latter with unbelief, is deemed absurd and delusive—

Nevertheless, the reasonableness of the Gospel in both these points may be clearly evinced—

It is not unreasonable that a man should be saved by faith.

[If faith were a mere assent to any doctrines, it would indeed be unreasonable to ascribe salvation to it—

But it is an humble reliance on the promises of God in Christ Jesusⁱ—

Is it unreasonable then that he who trusts in the death of Christ should feel its saving efficacy?—

Or that he who relies on God's promise, should experience his fidelity?—]

Nor is it unreasonable that a man should be damned for unbelief.

[If unbelief were a mere dissent from any doctrine, on account of its wanting sufficient evidence, *such unbelief* would be *comparatively* innocent—

^e Mark ix. 43—48.

^f Matt. xxv. 46.

^g 2 Thess. i. 8.

^h This is intimated by the omission of baptism in the latter clause of the text.

ⁱ Heb. xi. 13.

But the unbeliever rejects what has been established by the strongest evidence—

Through pride he denies God's representation of his fallen state^k—

He accounts the wisdom of God to be foolishness^l, and his truth a lie^m—

He pours contempt on the richest displays of love and mercyⁿ—

Such treatment *we* could not endure from a fellow-creature—

How then can we expect to treat GOD thus with impunity?—

Surely, if the wages of every sin is death, much more may it be the reward of so complicated a sin as unbelief—]

This point satisfactorily established, we shall,

III. Display its excellency.

Angels admire the Gospel, as we also should, if we understood its excellences—

1. It clearly defines the way of salvation.

[All other ways of salvation are indefinite—

Who can say what portion of repentance will expiate sin and purchase heaven?—

Or what sincere obedience is? or by whom performed?—

Or what degrees of insincerity will consist with it?—

But every one may know whether he believe in Christ—

Hence every one may form a judgment of his state before God—

Surely this may well recommend the Gospel to our acceptance—]

2. It is equally suited to all persons in all conditions.

[How ill suited would any other way have been to the dying thief!—

How long must it have been before the murderers of our Lord could have entertained a comfortable hope of acceptance!—

But the Gospel affords a prospect of salvation to all, however vile^o—

And is calculated to comfort us under every affliction—

What excellency can it possess that should more endear it to us?—]

3. It refers all the glory of our salvation to Christ alone.

^k Rev. iii. 17. ^l 1 Cor. i. 18, 23.

^m 1 John v. 10.

ⁿ Eph. ii. 7.

^o John vi. 37. Matt. xx. 9.

[Every other way of salvation leaves room for man to boast?^p—

But, on the plan of the Gospel, all are equally indebted to Christ^q—

All on earth and in heaven ascribe salvation to him alone^r—

Their happiness is the more dear to them as being the purchase of his blood—

Nor would any consent for an instant to rob him of his glory^s—]

4. It most secures the practice of good works.

[If the Gospel really gave a licence to sin it might well be rejected—

But it teaches us to mortify all sin, and to delight in good works^t—

This effect has, in every age, been manifested in the lives of God's people—

St. Paul, the great champion of the faith, was inferior to none in holiness^u—

And the contradictory objections, now urged against the preachers and professors of the Gospel, afford a strong testimony in their favour—]

APPLICATION—

1. To ministers.

[They who preach the Gospel ought, above all, to experience its power—

If they do not, their condemnation will be greatly aggravated—

Let us then examine whether we have truly, and indeed believed—

And let us comply with that solemn, but encouraging injunction^x—]

2. To Christians in general.

[Baptism does not supersede, but increase our obligation to believe^y—

However humiliating it be to seek salvation in another, we must submit^z—

The decree in the text is irreversible, and shall be executed in its season—

^p Rom. iii. 27. ^q 1 Tim. iv. 10. ^r Rev. i. 5. and v. 12, 13.

^s Comp. Gal. vi. 14. with Rev. iv. 10. ^t Tit. ii. 11, 12.

^u 2 Cor. xii. 11. ^x 1 Tim. iv. 16.

^y 1 Pet. iii. 21. and Rom. vi. 4. ^z Rom. x. 3.

II. Those he has prescribed are honourable to God and suitable to man—

[Any other method of salvation would have set the divine perfections, as it were, at variance—	. . .	
Justice required satisfaction for our breaches of God's law—	. . .	
Truth demanded the execution of the penalty which the law denounced—	. . .	
Holiness forbid any thing unclean to enter into heaven—	. . .	
But Christ has borne the penalty and satisfied divine justice—	. . .	23
And by faith we are interested in all that he has done and suffered ^e —	. . .	
Thus mercy may be exercised in consistency with truth and justice—	. . .	
And every perfection of the Deity be glorified in our salvation—	. . .	
Surely such a <i>plan</i> was <i>worthy of</i> an all-wise <i>God</i> —	. . .	
Nor could any other have been so suitable for fallen man—	. . .	
<i>What could we have hoped for from our obedience to the law?</i> —	. . .	
We are utterly incapable of fulfilling its strict demands—	. . .	16
Yet, if we could do this in future, it would avail us nothing, unless we could also expiate the guilt of	. . .	
our past transgressions—	. . .	
<i>But by believing in Christ we obtain a perfect righteousness</i> ^f —	. . .	
And are made spotless in the sight of God himself ^g —	. . .	
Nor are there any so <i>good</i> but they need this remedy—	. . .	
Nor any so <i>vile</i> but they may be saved by it—]	. . .	10

III. All attempts to substitute any other will be vain—

[Many are the refuges to which men flee, in a season of conviction—
 They substitute their own repentance, reformation, &c. in the place of faith—
 But Christ is the only foundation of a sinner's hope^h—
 The very offer of a Saviour supposes that *we are lost*—

Nor need this Gospel have been published, *if men could have saved themselves*— 5
 Can we *suppose* that Christ would have purchased this salvation at the price of his own blood, if men
 could have been saved without him?— 21
 Or that, when he delivered so peremptory a message, he intended to leave men at liberty to substitute
 any plans of their own devising?— 21
 Or that he will violate his own declarations to favour us?— 21
 We may be sure that, whether we approve it or not, his counsel shall stand—
He, who is "the true and faithful Witness," will certainly fulfil his own word 7
 What he so solemnly pronounced *at the very hour of his ascension*, he will infallibly execute at his
 second coming— 8
 What *he had then authority* to publish, *he will hereafter have power to enforce*—] 6

IV. To embrace them will be to secure everlasting happiness—

[The promise of eternal life is unequivocally made to faith ⁱ—
 As soon as we believe in Christ, all our sins are forgiven ^k—
 And we have a title to an heavenly inheritance ^l—
 Nor shall we be deprived of the blessing on account either of the weakness of our faith or the great-
 ness of our conflicts—
 The person who is most *strong in faith* will have most comfort in his way— } 11
 But the *weakest believer* shall not lose his reward ^m— }
 His faith indeed will be tried by many conflicts ⁿ—
 But He who has been the Author of it will also be the Finisher ^o—]

^e Acts xiii. 39. ^f Rom. iii. 22. ^g Eph. v. 27. ^h 1 Cor. iii. 11. ⁱ Acts xvi. 31. ^k Acts x. 43.
^l Rom. viii. 17. ^m In the text, respect is had, not to the strength, but to the reality of our faith.
ⁿ 1 Tim. vi. 12. ^o Heb. xii. 2.

V. To reject them will be to involve ourselves in everlasting misery—

[The Gospel is the brightest display of God's wisdom and goodness ^p —	12
And his intention in it is, to deliver men from destruction—	14
But while it is a mean of life to some, it will prove an occasion of death to others ^q —	27
We may err, and that materially, in some things, and yet be saved at last ^r —	24
But if we reject or adulterate the Gospel, we must perish ^s —	22
Nor should this be thought "an hard saying"—	
We have ruined ourselves by manifold transgressions—	
Nor can we possibly restore ourselves to the divine favour—	17
But God has provided an adequate remedy for us—	
The rejection of that cannot but aggravate our guilt—	
We'll therefore may it aggravate our condemnation also—	17
He never offered such mercy to the fallen angels—	
Nor had he been unjust if he had withheld it from us—	
But it pleased him to deliver up his Son for us—	17
Shall he not then punish the despisers of his mercy?—	
Surely his patience shall at last give way to wrath ^t —	
And compassionate invitations be turned into indignant reproofs ^u —	20
Nor shall the damned themselves deny the equity of his procedure ^x —]	

VI. To spread the knowledge of them should be the labour and ambition of all Christians—

[The benevolence and dignity of our Saviour, while giving this last commission, are equally worthy our	20
notice and admiration—	9
In obedience to his commands the Apostles went forth into all the world—	
And delivered their message at the peril of their lives—	

To them are we indebted for all the light we enjoy—
 And is not their *message* still as *interesting* as ever?— } 25
 Is it not still the *Christian minister's warrant and directory*?— }
 Is it not the *believer's chief solace and support*?— } 15
 Yes, the Saviour's voice is *still sounding* in our ears— }
 Should we then regard it with indifference?
 Should we imitate those who *took away the key of knowledge*?^y— }
 Or those who *forbad* the Apostles to *speak* to the Gentiles?^z— }
 Let us rather labour to *spread the joyful sound*— } 18
 And to *diffuse the blessings* of salvation through heathen lands— }
 Nor ever rest till that glorious promise be accomplished^a—]

^p 1 Cor. ii. 7. ^q 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. ^r 1 Cor. iii. 15. ^s Gal. i. 8, 9. ^t Heb. iii. 9, 11.
^u Compare John vii. 37, with Matt. xxv. 26, 30, 41. ^x Matt. xxii. 12. ^y Luke xl. 52.
^z 1 Thess. ii. 16. ^a Isai. xi. 9.

DISCUSSION BY PROPOSITIONS.

MCCCCLXIV.

MARK XVI. 15, 16.—THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.

I. THERE will be an awful difference between the states of different men in the day of judgment.

It cannot be that the same portion should be reserved for all.

[God, as our Lawgiver, must manifest a regard to his own law—

And, as our King, must distinguish between his faithful and rebellious subjects—

But there is no sufficient difference put between them in this world^a—

The wicked have no certain punishment, nor the righteous any adequate reward—

On the contrary, *they* often riot in ease, affluence, and honour, while *these* languish in pain, want, and infamy^b—

The notices also, which are on the consciences of men, afford reason to expect a future day of retribution^c—]

Some will be exalted to a state of unspeakable felicity.

[They will be delivered from the corruption which here cleaved to them—

They will be admitted to the blissful regions of paradise—

Their capacity of comprehension and enjoyment will be greatly enlarged—

They will join an assembly of most pure and blessed spirits—

Above all, they will behold their God and Saviour^d—

They will receive public testimonies of his approbation^e—

An unfading crown of righteousness will be given to them^f—

They will be seated with him on his throne of glory^g—

They will praise and adore him with all their powers—

Nor shall their happiness know either intermission or end^h—]

^a Eccles. ix. 2.

^b Ps. lxxiii. 3—14.

^c Rom. i. 32. and ii. 15.

^d 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

^e Matt. xxv. 21.

^f 2 Tim. iv. 8.

^g Rev. iii. 21.

^h Rev. iv. 8. and iii. 12.

Others will be cast down to a state of inconceivable misery.

[They will not be permitted to stand in the congregation of the righteousⁱ—

The Judge will banish them with indignation from his presence^k—

Shame and contempt shall be poured upon them before all^l—

They will be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone^m—

God himself will pour out upon them the vials of his wrathⁿ—

Their own consciences also will bitterly reproach them^o—

They will have a distant view of the happiness they have lost^p—

And an enlarged capacity to endure the torment inflicted on them—

Nor shall they have any thing to assuage their anguish^q—

Not one moment's intermission of pain will be granted them—

Nor shall millions of ages terminate their misery^r—]

There will be no intermediate state between these.

[The idea of purgatory is an absurd fiction—

Punishment, in this world, does not change the nature of man—

Pharaoh was more and more hardened under ten successive plagues^s—

And in hell, so far from repenting, they blaspheme God^t—

The Scripture assures us that no change shall take place after death^u—

If Judas ever were brought to heaven, our Lord's assertion would be false^x—

Nor have the dead any prospect of annihilation^y—

Not the remotest period shall determine the existence of one single soul—]

II. These states will be fixed according to men's acceptance or rejection of the Gospel.

It is certainly true that our works will be the criterion whereby we shall be judged in the last day.

[This is frequently asserted in the Holy Scriptures^z—

ⁱ Ps. i. 5.

^k Matt. xxv. 41.

^l Dan. xii. 2.

^m Rev. xx. 10.

ⁿ Ps. xi. 6.

^o Wisd. v. 4.

^p Luke xvi. 23.

^q Luke xvi. 24, 25.

^r Rev. xiv. 11.

^s Exod. viii. 32.

^t Rev. xvi. 9.

^u Eccles. ix. 10. Rev. xxii. 11.

^x Mark xiv. 21.

^y Luke xx. 36, 38.

^z Eccles. xii. 14.

² Cor. v. 10.

Our Lord has declared it in his account of the judicial process^a—

Nor can the smallest doubt be entertained respecting it—]

But a due reception of the Gospel is a very important work.

[God has given it as his special command that we believe on his Son^b—

And this command is as important as any in the decalogue—

Cognizance therefore will be taken of our violations of this, as well as of any other, duty—]

Indeed this work must be performed before we can do any other with acceptance.

[Without faith in Christ we cannot do any thing that is good^c—

Nor can we derive any thing from him unless we be united to him^d—

But faith is the only bond by which that union can be effected^e—

Till we believe, therefore, we can be only as withered branches^f—

Hence that striking and positive declaration of the Apostle^g—]

There is an inseparable connexion between our faith and our works.

[We may distinguish between them as between the cause and effect—

But we cannot possibly separate them in our practice—

Our works are the fruits and evidences of our faith^h—

God, who searcheth the heart, might indeed decide upon our faith as it is seated there—

But man can judge of it only by the fruit it produces—

The day of judgment is for the purpose of displaying to the whole creation the equity of the divine procedureⁱ—

On this account our works will be brought forth as the ground of God's decision—

But, as he who judges of the fruit of a tree, judges of the tree itself, so God, in deciding on the fruits of our faith, decides eventually on the faith that produced them—]

Nor shall this connexion be forgotten in the day of judgment.

^a Matt. xxv. 34—45.

^d ver. 4.

^f John xv. 6.

ⁱ Rom. ii. 5.

^b 1 John iii. 23.

^e John vi. Compare ver. 35. and 56.

^g Heb. xi. 6.

^c John xv. 6.

^h Jam. ii. 18.

[Our Lord will surely not forget his own repeated declarations^k—

In inquiring into our works, he will never overlook that which is the root and principle of all other works—

In considering how we acted towards each other, he will not be indifferent about our conduct towards himself—

We may be sure therefore that the text shall be fulfilled in that day—

And that, while the rejecters of his Gospel shall perish, the true believer alone shall be saved—]

INFER—

1. The folly of neglecting the Gospel—

[Men usually respect the sanctions of human laws—

What effect then should not the sanctions of the Gospel have upon us?—

When the sentence shall be passed, can we reverse it^l?—

If not, it must be madness to neglect this warning—

Such folly degrades us below the beasts that perish^m—

Let the past time suffice for such base and fatal conduct—]

2. The wisdom of embracing it with our whole hearts—

[It is wisdom to regard things in proportion to their importance—

But what so important as the declarations of the Gospel?—

Temporal things are nothing in comparison of heaven and hell—

Every temporal consideration therefore should be as nothing in our eyesⁿ—

We should “buy the truth, and not part with it” at any price^o—

This is true wisdom, however it may be accounted folly—

And “wisdom, ere long, shall be justified of all her children”—]

^k John iii. 18, 36.

^m Isai. i. 3.

^o Prov. xxiii. 23.

^l Isai. x. 3. 1 Cor. x. 22.

ⁿ Luke ix. 25. and xii. 4.

DISCUSSION BY PERPETUAL APPLICATION.

MCCCCLXV.

MARK XVI. 15, 16.—THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.

INCESSANT was our Lord's attention to the welfare of his Church—

Regardless both of his own sufferings and glory, he was ever occupied in that one concern—

On the very eve of his crucifixion he instituted the memorials of his dying love—

And, at the moment of his ascension, provided for the instruction of the world to the remotest period of time—

He had an eye to us, no less than to those of his own age and nation—

Shall we not then pay attention to his parting words?—

Shall we not consider them in reference to ourselves?—

The most important truths contained in them are obvious and acknowledged—

Let us then consider them in a way of practical inquiry,

I. What knowledge have we of the Gospel?

The Gospel is a most stupendous display of the divine mercy.

[It reveals salvation to a ruined world^a—

It discovers God himself as manifest in the flesh, and dying for sin^b—

It offers, and entreats us to accept, redemption through his blood^c—

It requires nothing to be done on our part to *merit* his favour^d—

But teaches us to improve carefully what we receive freely^e—]

^a 1 Tim. i. 15.

^b 1 Tim. iii. 16. Acts xx. 28.

^c 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

^d Isai. lv. 1.

^e Tit. ii. 11, 12.

But its true nature and design are not generally understood.

[Some take up prejudices against it as a licentious system—
Nor will they be at any pains to acquire just views of its doctrines—

Others adulterate it with a mixture of human inventions^f—
Or destroy its efficacy by a self-righteous dependence^g—]

Let us however inquire what are our views respecting it—

[Do we indeed see it to be “worthy of all acceptation?”—

Does the remedy it proposes appear suited to our necessities?—

Is it considered by us as “the power of God and the wisdom of God^h?”—

Do we “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of itⁱ?”—

Has God shined in our hearts to give us these views^k?—

Or does Satan yet blind our eyes that we cannot see them^l?

Let us search whether the veil be yet taken from our hearts^m.—]

II. What effect have its sanctions produced upon us?

We are astonished to see how little the sanctions of the Gospel are regarded.

[We can form very little idea of the felicity of heaven—

Nor have we any adequate conceptions of the torments of hell—

But there is nothing grand, which is not used to represent the one—

Or terrible, which does not serve to describe the other—

Yet, awful as they are, few are suitably affected with them—

Motives taken from temporal and visible things have weight—

But eternal things, because invisible, engage no attention—

They are esteemed, in great measure, as “cunningly devised fablesⁿ”—]

We ask then what effect they have produced on us?

[Are we stimulated to diligence by a prospect of heaven?—

^f 2 Cor. ii. 17.

^g Gal. v. 2, 4.

^h 1 Cor. i. 24. Rom. i. 16.

ⁱ Phil. iii. 8.

^k 2 Cor. iv. 6.

^l 2 Cor. iv. 4.

^m 2 Cor. iii. 14.

ⁿ 2 Pet. i. 16.

Does the thought of hell impress us with holy fear?—

Does a dread of the destroying angel induce us to keep our hearts sprinkled with the blood of Jesus^o?—

How obdurate must we be if we be not thus influenced!—]

III. What evidence have we that our faith is scriptural and saving?

We are apt to mistake the nature of saving faith.

[Some suppose it to mean no more than an assent to the Gospel—

Others imagine it to consist in assurance of our interest in Christ—

But both of these are equally remote from the truth—

The former may accord with the indulgence of every sin—

The latter is no where declared necessary to salvation—

It is indeed an high privilege to know our sins forgiven^p—

But we must be pardoned before we can know that we are pardoned—]

But the Scripture account of faith is clear and precise.

[Faith, with respect to *its nature*, is a simple reliance on Christ^a—

In *its origin*, it is a free, unmerited gift of God^r—

And in *its effects*, it is invariably productive of good works^s—

Such was the faith of the first converts and the Jailor^t—]

Let us then inquire whether we be really possessed of it.

[Have we ever found the difficulty of believing?—

And under a sense of our weakness cried to God for faith?^u—

Has God in answer to our prayer wrought faith in our hearts^x?—

Are we enabled by it to overcome the maxims and habits of the world^y?—

Are we filled by means of it with love to the brethren^z—

And are we purified by it from earthly, sensual, devilish affections^a?—

Let us thus examine ourselves whether we be in the faith^b—

We may deceive ourselves; but we cannot deceive God^c—]

^o Heb. ix. 14. and xi. 28. ^p 1 John v. 13. ^q 1 Pet. ii. 6.

^r Phil. i. 29.

^s Jam. ii. 26. Col. i. 6.

^t Acts ii. 37—47. Acts xvi. 30—34.

^u Mark ix. 24.

^x Ephes. i. 19.

^y 1 John v. 5.

^z Gal. v. 6. 1 Pet. i. 22.

^a Acts xv. 9.

^b 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

^c Gal. vi. 7.

ADDRESS—

1. To those that are in unbelief.

[The Gospel was to be “preached to every creature in the world”—

And a woe is denounced against the ministers who preach it not^d—

What it is their duty to preach, it must be our duty to hear^e—

Know then that to you is the word of this salvation sent^f—

Put it not from you, nor adjudge yourselves unworthy of eternal life^g—

A time will come when you will wish that you had received it—

“Consider this; and the Lord give you understanding in all things^h”—]

2. To those who are weak in faith.

[You greatly dishonour God by your doubts and fears—

What could the Saviour have done more for you than he has doneⁱ?—

What reason can you have to doubt his power or willingness to save?—

Does the guilt of sin dismay, or its power oppress your soul?—

Christ will both expiate its guilt^k, and subdue its power^l—

Plead the promise in the text, and it shall be fulfilled to you—]

3. To those who are strong in faith.

[How glorious is the prospect opened to you by the Lord Jesus!—

Let it fill you with holy gratitude and joy—

And now shew a concern for the honour of your Lord and Saviour—

Shew what is the genuine scope and tendency of the Gospel^m—

Silence by your lives the calumnies of the ungodly—

Let the efficacy of faith be seen in the excellence of your works—

And the Lord grant that you may ever be able to say with the apostleⁿ—]

^d 1 Cor. ix. 16. Ezek. xxxiv. 2.

^e Matt. x. 14, 15. 1 Thess. iv. 8.

^f Acts xiii. 26.

^g Acts xiii. 46.

^h 2 Tim. ii. 7.

ⁱ Isai. v. 4.

^k 1 John ii. 1, 2.

^l Mic. vii. 19. Rom. vi. 14.

^m Tit. iii. 8. as connected with the foregoing verses 4—7.

ⁿ Heb. x. 39.

MR. CLAUDE'S *Topics referred to in the Skeleton* pp. 415—419
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1. Rise from species to genus.
2. Descend from genus to species.
3. Remark the divers characters of a vice, which is forbidden, or of a virtue, which is commanded.
4. Observe the relation of one subject to another.
5. Observe whether some things be not supposed, which are not expressed.
6. Reflect on the person speaking or acting.
7. Reflect on the state of the person speaking or acting.
8. Remark the time of a word or action.
9. Observe place.
10. Consider the persons addressed.
11. Examine the particular state of persons addressed.
12. Consider the principles of a word or action.
13. Consider consequences.
14. Reflect on the end proposed in an expression or an action.
15. Consider whether there be any thing remarkable in the manner of the speech or action.
16. Compare words and actions with similar words and actions.
17. Remark the differences of words and actions on different occasions.
18. Contrast words and actions.
19. Examine the grounds, or causes of an action or expression ; and shew the truth or equity of it.
20. Remark the good and bad in expressions and actions.
21. Suppose things.
22. Guard against objections.
23. Consider Characters of— Majesty — Meanness — Infirmary — Necessity—Utility—Evidence, &c.
24. Remark degrees.
25. Observe different interests.
26. Distinguish—define—divide.
27. Compare the different parts of the text together.

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 - II. INDEX OF PASSAGES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, which are not professedly considered in the order of Books and Chapters in which they occur; but which are discussed in those parts of the New Testament, in which they are cited.
 - III. A GENERAL INDEX (Alphabetical and Analytical) of the Subjects of the several Skeletons, and of the various subordinate Topics, which are incidentally treated or illustrated therein.
 - IV. A LITURGICAL INDEX, referring to such Skeletons or Homilies as illustrate the portions of Scripture, read as Proper Lessons, or cited in the Book of Common Prayer, or which explain or vindicate particular parts thereof.
 - V. AN INDEX OF SUBJECTS, adapted to Sermons on various Public Occasions.
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^a This Index has been prepared by the Rev. CHARLES SIMEON, M. A.

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* This and the following Indexes, &c. have been prepared by the Rev. THOMAS HARTWELL HORNE, B. D.

III.

A GENERAL INDEX

(ALPHABETICAL AND ANALYTICAL)

OF THE SUBJECTS OF THE SEVERAL SKELETONS,

AND OF

THE VARIOUS SUBORDINATE TOPICS,

WHICH ARE INCIDENTALLY TREATED OR ILLUSTRATED THEREIN.

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II. PROPHECIES concerning Jesus Christ.

1. General Prophecies.

2. Particular Prophecies concerning Jesus Christ.

(1.) Prophecies concerning his INCARNATION.

(2.) Prophecies concerning the QUALITY in which Christ should appear; including also the NAMES and TITLES given to Him in the Scriptures.

(3.) Prophecies concerning the PERSON and MINISTRY of Christ.

(4.) Prophecies concerning the SUFFERINGS, DEATH, RESURRECTION, and ASCENSION of Jesus Christ.

(5.) Prophecies concerning Christ's COMING TO JUDGMENT.

(6.) A Prophetic Summary of the CHARACTER of Jesus Christ.

III. On the DEITY and MEDIATORIAL WORK of Jesus Christ.

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JEWS, or ISRAELITES.

A Summary of this Title:—

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- II. Illustration of the LEADING CIRCUMSTANCES in the HISTORY of the Jews:
 1. From their DEPARTURE OUT OF EGYPT to their Entrance into Canaan.
 2. From their ENTRANCE INTO CANAAN to the Establishment of the Monarchy.
 3. From the ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MONARCHY to the Death of Solomon.
 4. From the REVOLT OF THE TEN TRIBES to the Destruction of Jerusalem.
 5. After the RETURN OF THE JEWS FROM THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY to the time of Jesus Christ.
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MINISTERS.

A Summary of this Title:—

- I. The INSTITUTION of their Office, and its IMPORTANCE.
- II. The CALL and ORDINATION of Ministers.
- III. The COMMISSION and QUALIFICATIONS of Ministers.
- IV. The SPECIAL DUTIES of Ministers to the FLOCKS entrusted to them, and their ENCOURAGEMENTS.
- V. The DUTIES of People to their Ministers.

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MIRACLES.

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- I. EVIDENCE of Miracles. — Their NATURE.
- II. Elucidations of particular Miracles related in the OLD TESTAMENT.
- III. Elucidations of particular Miracle related in the NEW TESTAMENT.
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- III. THE DUTY and PRIVILEGE of Prayer.
- IV. SOCIAL Prayer.
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TYPE.

A Summary of this article:—

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III. **TYPICAL INSTITUTIONS.**

IV. **TYPICAL EVENTS.**

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WHICH ARE EITHER READ AS

PROPER LESSONS, &c. THROUGHOUT THE YEAR,

OR ARE CITED IN THE

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<i>Gosp.</i> Matt. xiv. 28. . .	XI. 433	
Ev.-1 Les. Gen. xxxiv. 31. . .	I. 260	
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Mo.-1 Les. Gen. xxxix. 9. . .	I. 264	
<i>Epist.</i> Eph. v. 2.	XVII. 371	
5-7.	375	
8.	378	
9.	383	
14.	389	
<i>Gosp.</i> Luke xi. 21, 22. . .	XII. 449	
27, 28.	453	
Ev.-1 Les. Gen. xlii. 21. . .	I. 276	
36.	282	
<i>Fourth Sunday.</i>		
Mo.- <i>Epist.</i> Gal. iv. 22-24. . .	XVII. 180	
30.	184	
<i>Gosp.</i> John vi. 14.	XIII. 366	
Ev.-1 Les. Gen. xlv. 27, 28. .	I. 291	
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Mo.-1 Les. Exod. iii. 2, 3. . .	III. 319	
12.	322	
14.	327	
<i>Epist.</i> Heb. ix. 11, 12. . .	XIX. 288	
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<i>Gosp.</i> John viii. 46. . . .	XIII. 465	
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Mo.-1 Les. Exod. ix. 16. . .	I. 352	
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2 Les. Matt. xxvi. 24. . . .	XI. 548	
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56.	563	
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<i>Epist.</i> Phil. ii. 5-8. . . .	XVIII. 50	
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<i>Gosp.</i> Matt. xxvii. 3-5. . .	XI. 575	
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24, 25.	583	
26-31.	588	
38-44.	593	
45.	598	
51.	602	
Ev.-1 Les. Exod. x. 3.	I. 362	
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2 Les. Heb. v. 7-9. . . .	XIX. 218	
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2 Les. Rom. vi. 1-4. . . .	XV. 141	
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14.	150	
17.	153	
21.	156	
23.	161	

<i>Epist.</i> Col. iii. 1.	XVIII. 223
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3, 4.	232
<i>Gosp.</i> John xx. 8, 9. . . .	XIV. 210
Ev.-1 Les. Exod. xiv. 15. . .	I. 398
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2 Les. Acts ii. 32, 33. . .	XIV. 245
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7.	531
10.	537
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<i>Gosp.</i> John xx. 21-23. . .	XIV. 214
Ev.-1 Les. Num. xxii. 18, 19.	II. 131
31.	135
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Mo.-1 Les. Num. xxiii. 7-10. .	II. 141
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19.	149
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<i>Epist.</i> 1 Pet. ii. 19-23. . .	XX. 206
24.	211
25.	215
<i>Gosp.</i> John xi. 11. (9.). . .	XIV. 499
Ev.-1 Les. Num. xxv. 10-13. .	II. 160
<i>Third Sunday.</i>	
Mo.-1 Les. Deut. iv. 7-9. . .	II. 227
<i>Epist.</i> 1 Pet. ii. 13-17. . .	XX. 198
<i>Gosp.</i> John xvi. 24.	XIV. 100
Ev.-1 Les. Deut. v. 28, 29. . .	II. 232-291
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Mo.-1 Les. Deut. vi. 10-12. .	II. 292
<i>Epist.</i> James i. 17.	XX. 32
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<i>Gosp.</i> John xvi. 8-11. . . .	XIV. 93
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27.	50
<i>Gosp.</i> John xvi. 24.	XIV. 100
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31.	108
Ev.-1 Les. Deut. ix. 4-6. . .	II. 305
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Mo.-1 Les. Deut. xii. 23-25. .	II. 341
<i>Epist.</i> 1 Pet. iv. 7.	XX. 247
8.	250
<i>Gosp.</i> John xv. 26.	XIV. 89
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2 Les. Acts x. 34, 35.	XIV. 368
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43.	378
Epist. ii. 1-4.	239
Gosp. John xiv. 15-17.	38
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21.	45
Ev.-1 Les. Isa. xi. 2, 3.	VII. 539
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9.	547
10.	551
2 Les. Acts xix. 15.	XIV. 484
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Mo.-1 Les. Gen. i. 26.	I. 1
2 Les. Matt. iii. 7-10.	XI. 16
11.	23
12.	28
15.	31
Gosp. John iii. 3.	XIII. 245
14, 15.	250
Ev.-1 Les. Gen. xviii. 13, 14.	I. 139
19.	144
32.	150
2 Les. 1 John v. 3.	XX. 515
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7.	531
10.	537
11, 12.	539
13.	543
14, 15.	548
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Mo.-1 Les. Josh. x. 24, 25.	II. 592
Epist. 1 John iv. 9, 10.	XX. 479
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16.	490
16.	494
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18.	508
19.	513
Gosp. Luke xvi. 25.	XII. 559
29-31.	563
Ev.-1 Les. Josh. xxiii. 10, 11.	VI. 616
14.	618

Second Sunday.

Mo.-Epist. 1 John iii. 14.	XX. 442
16.	445
17.	450
20, 21.	454
23.	459
24.	464
Gosp. Luke xiv. 16-18.	XII. 527
Ev.-1 Les. Judg. v. 24-27.	III. 16
31.	20

Third Sunday.

Mo. 1 Les. 1 Sam. ii. 1-10.	III. 109
25.	113
30.	126

Epist. 1 Pet. v. 5.	XX. 269
7.	275
8, 9.	278
10, 11.	281
Gosp. Luke xv. 3-7.	XII. 534
8-10.	537
Ev.-1 Les. 1 Sam. iii. 18.	III. 130

Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

Mo.-1 Les. 1 Sam. xii. 16-23.	III. 166
23, 24.	171
Epist. Rom. viii. 18.	XV. 290
23.	294
Gosp. Luke vi. 39.	XII. 345
Ev.-1 Les. 1 Sam. xiii. 11-13.	III. 175

Fifth Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. 1 Sam. xv. 11.	III. 182
13-16.	187
Epist. 1 Pet. iii. 12.	XX. 220
13-15.	223
Gosp. Luke v. 8-11.	XII. 317
Ev.-1 Les. 1 Sam. xvii. 45, 46.	III. 204

Sixth Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. 2 Sam. xii. 1-7.	III. 265
13.	269
Epist. Rom. vi. 3, 4.	XV. 141
8-11.	146
Gosp. Matt. v. 20.	XI. 98
21, 22.	113
23, 24.	119
25, 26.	123
Ev.-1 Les. 2 Sam. xix. 34.	III. 299

Seventh Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. 2 Sam. xxi. 1.	III. 302
Epist. Rom. vi. 21.	XV. 156
23.	161
Ev.-1 Les. 2 Sam. xxiv. 11-15.	III. 316

Eighth Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. 1 Kings xiii. 4.	III. 374
26.	379
Epist. Rom. viii. 12.	XV. 265
13.	267
14.	270
15.	276
16.	283
17.	286
Gosp. Matt. vii. 15-20.	XII. 271
21.	276
Ev.-1 Les. 1 Kings xvii. 15, 16.	III. 390
22, 23.	393

Ninth Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. 1 Kings xviii. 12.	III. 398
21.	402
24.	406
Epist. 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.	XVI. 215
11.	220
12.	224
13.	226
Gosp. Luke xvi. 8.	XII. 552
Ev.-1 Les. 1 Kings xix. 11-14.	III. 411
18.	415
21.	419

Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

Mo.-1 Les. 1 Kings xxi. 20. . .	III. 429
27-29	435
Epist. 1 Cor. xii. 3. . . .	XVI. 297
11. . . .	301
Gosp. Luke xix. 41, 42. . .	XIII. 72
Ev.-1 Les. 1 Kings xxii. 8. . .	III. 439
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Eleventh Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. 2 Kings v. 13. . .	III. 487
18, 19. .	493
21, 21. .	499
Epist. 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. . .	XVI. 345
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Gosp. Luke xviii. 13, 14. .	XIII. 30
Ev.-1 Les. 2 Kings ix. 36. . .	III. 514

Twelfth Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. 2 Kings x. 16. . .	III. 517
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Epist. 2 Cor. iii. 6. . .	XVI. 450, 455
7-9. . .	461
Gosp. Mark vii. 32-36. . .	XII. 56
Ev.-1 Les. 2 Kings xviii. 4. .	III. 537

Thirteenth Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. 2 Kings xix. 30, 31	III. 544
Epist. Gal. iii. 19. . .	XVII. 76-139
21, 22. . .	139
Gosp. Luke x. 30-35. . .	XII. 422

Fourteenth Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. Jer. v. 23, 24. . .	IX. 62
Epist. Gal. v. 16. . . .	XVII. 214
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18. . . .	226
19-24. . .	232
Gosp. Luke xvii. 17, 18. .	XIII. 10

Fifteenth Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. Jer. xxxv. 13, 14. .	IX. 271
Epist. Gal. vi. 14. . . .	XVII. 259
Gosp. Matt. vi. 24. . . .	XI. 226
25-34. .	230
Ev.-1 Les. Jer. xxxvi. 27, 28. .	IX. 278

Sixteenth Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. Ezek. ii. 4. . . .	IX. 340
Epist. Eph. iii. 14-19. .	XVII. 325
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Gosp. Luke vii. 14-16. .	XII. 357
Ev.-1 Les. Ezek. xiii. 10-12. .	IX. 372

Seventeenth Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. Ezek. xiv. 4. . . .	IX. 376
Epist. Eph. iv. 1-3. . .	XVII. 332
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Gosp. Luke xiv. 7-10. .	XII. 518
Ev.-1 Les. Ezek. xviii. 25-30. .	IX. 390

Eighteenth Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. Ezek. xx. 37. . . .	IX. 397
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Epist. 1 Cor. i. 4-9. . .	XVI. 1
Gosp. Matt. xxii. 41, 42. .	XI. 510
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Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Mo.-1 Les. Dan. iii. 28. . . .	IX. 480
Epist. Eph. iv. 20, 21. . .	XVII. 352
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Gosp. [Mark ii. 9-12.] .	XII. 9
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Gosp. Matt. xxii. 2, 3. . .	XI. 499
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Ev.-1 Les. Micah vi. 2, 3. . .	X. 316
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Twenty-first Sunday.

Mo.-1 Les. Habak. ii. 3. . . .	X. 364
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Mo.-1 Les. Prov. ii. 1-6. . . .	VII. 5
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Gosp. Matt. xviii. 32-35. .	XI. 481
Ev.-1 Les. Prov. iii. 5, 6. . .	VII. 20
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Mo.-1 Les. Prov. xi. 18. . . .	VII. 104
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30. . . .	112
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Gosp. [Mark xii. 17.] . .	XII. 136
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Twenty-fourth Sunday.

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Gosp. [Mark ix. 25-29.] .	XII. 40

Ev.-1 Les. Prov. xiv. 9. . . .	VII. 128
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12. . . .	134
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<i>Gosp.</i> John vi. 14. . . .	XIII. 366
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Mo.-1 Les. Prov. xxiii. 17, 18. . . .	VII. 221
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<i>Epist.</i> Eph. ii. 19—22. . . .	XVII. 312
<i>Gosp.</i> John xx. 27, 28. . . .	XIV. 218
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